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COMMUNITY EVALUATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS
CABLE TELEVISION: 5 CASE STUDIES

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANN R. MRVICA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 1992

School of Education

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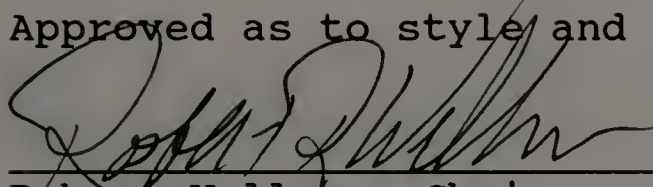
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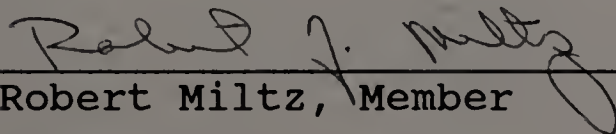
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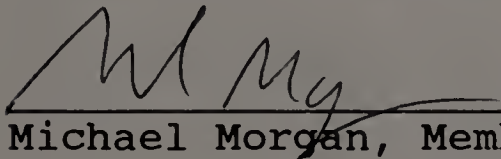
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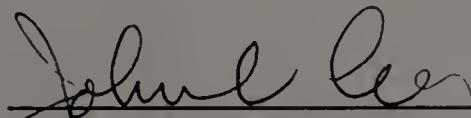
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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY EVALUATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS

CABLE TELEVISION: 5 CASE STUDIES

MAY 1992

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This research documents current practices used to evaluate public access cable television. Five communities were studied; three in Massachusetts, one in Rhode Island, and one in Connecticut. In-depth interviews with the person in charge of public access cable television and with one member of the cable advisory committee were used as the main data source for the research.

The results indicate that qualitative, non-formal evaluation modes such as discussion and public hearings dominate as the methods used in the communities studied.

An interesting finding was that most of the interviewees felt subscribers of cable television did not realize they were paying for public access cable television. If subscribers do not realize they pay for public access cable television, they will not question what they are getting for their money.

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CHAPTER 1

HISTORY OF PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE TELEVISION

Introduction

Public access was mandated for certain franchises by the FCC in 1972 to give the public an opportunity for free expression. It is no longer mandated by the FCC but many communities have included public access in the contracts negotiated with the cable companies that are selected to serve the community. Public access utilizes funds paid by subscribers to the cable companies. Public access efforts typically include equipment and facilities to produce television programs, training for community volunteer access producers in the use of the equipment and the scheduling and playing of tapes over the public access channel on the cable system.

The literature on access provides many guidelines for access to utilize for determining policy and provides a number of case histories of access operations but does not

develop a firm basis for assessing what various access efforts have accomplished or any commonly agreed upon criteria for the distinction of successful from unsuccessful access efforts. This research seeks to remedy this situation.

This research will report on what process decision makers have utilized when a determination of public access performance was called for. Access centers and all those connected with them will be provided information on what is considered "successful" by various constituents that play a role in the access effort. The articulation and discussion of what a successful access effort is will serve to crystalize what is being funded and will help to develop a context for illustrating how those interviewed think about the funding of access efforts.

This research will first provide a historical perspective on public access cable television and then explore the literature on the subject. Then the report will focus on the original research done. This original research utilizes twelve in-depth interviews spanning five communities as it's data source. The results of those interviews are provided in Chapter 4 and a discussion of the results is located in Chapter 5.

The first chapter is a history that is written to gain insight into where public access came from. Although not intended to be complete, this chapter focuses on the regulatory and structural history of public access cable television. It outlines the sources and regulation of access. It also provides a sketch or a typical profile of an access effort. Documentation on access as a phenomenon with details on audience, producers, and access programming will be more fully developed in the literature review section.

The history of cable television starts in 1949 with community antenna systems being installed to improve the reception of broadcast stations in the region. Over time, technology allowed cable television operators to import signals from great distances, and the appeal of cable in the 1980's has been extended from improved television reception to the increased number of programming choices it offered subscribers. This change from improved reception to increased choices is the basis for much of the tension in the current status of public access. Now that cable sales are based more on the options the cable service can offer to subscribers the cable operator is motivated to regain control of that channel being used by public access. As evidence of this a number of court cases are covered in this chapter. It seems that some cable operators do not feel that the public access channel is

making the economic contribution that a commercially offered programming channel could.

Because it is difficult to understand what public access is currently without being familiar with the development and struggles that have occurred, this chapter delineates the history of public access cable television.

The section on the 1950's will reveal that the FCC did not regulate cable and that the FCC stance changed once the multiplicity of choices offered by cable became an economic threat to broadcast stations. The chapter also exposes a number of technical and political factors that fed into the creation of public access. The FCC, in the late 1960's began to desire to develop the potential of cable technology and new rules were developed which required local origination for cable systems over a certain size. This chapter will show how the development of local origination combined with the articulation by the FCC to have a common carrier role for cable paved the way for proposals and experiments in public access television.

By 1972, the FCC Report and Order required cable systems operating in major television markets, as a condition of carrying any broadcast signal, to have public access channels. The regulations sought to promote the First Amendment goal of diversity through many viewpoints.

According to the FCC guidelines no control of content could be exercised by the cable company.

Although the FCC mandated public access at the federal level, cable television licenses are granted at the local level. Because of this local flavor and because of the volunteer nature of public access efforts there is no single example which can serve as a blueprint for public access. The typical parameters of access efforts are offered in this chapter to help serve as a frame of reference for the reader who may be unfamiliar with public access centers.

The chapter also explores how the FCC rules were challenged in the courts and on what basis the Supreme Court struck down the FCC's access rules. It then fell to local government to request public access for the community and because they were now in charge, local government then faced challenges to local control mounted by cable operators in the 1980's. The Cable Communications Act of 1984 as it pertains to public access is also explored in this chapter.

Lastly this chapter includes material on the efforts and accomplishments of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. This is included because they are the only national organization specifically concerned with access developments and issues.

History Of Cable

After World War II the public was buying the products that they had foregone due to the sacrifices that the war effort demanded. Televisions were desired by the buying public but outside of major cities there were often difficulties in receiving a clear picture on the television screen. Because the television signal is basically a line of sight signal, intervening mountains and sky scrapers can prevent good reception. Also, between 1948 and 1952 the FCC froze all new television station licenses, so getting new television stations for better reception was not possible.

Stores that wished to sell televisions started building tall antennas to feed their demonstration televisions. But soon the customer found that the television did not receive clear pictures when the television left the store and was brought home. As a result there was a need to distribute the signal from the central antenna. Each person could have installed their own antenna, but if mountains were blocking the signal the antenna would have to be quite high. The concept and practice of community antenna television (CATV) had arrived.

There were found to be two versions of where the first cable system was started and who started it. In Baldwin and McVoy [1988] and in Ryan's [1986] work the community of Lansford, Pennsylvania is credited with having the first system. The Lansford system was said to be built by Robert J. Tarlton in 1949. He built an antenna on top of the mountains and ran a cable to the store where he sold television sets. This was extended to households for a \$100 installation fee and a charge of \$2 per month for the continuation of service. In another source I found the credit for the first system going to L.E. Parson:

There is some good-natured dispute among pioneers in the industry concerning who built the first cable system... However, L.E. Parsons (who is no longer in CATV) has the best documented claim and is generally credited with having constructed the first cable system in the country at Astoria, Ore. in 1949. Where he put an antenna on top of a hotel and after getting good pictures to his apartment started attaching other locations.
[Mayer, 1969, as quoted in Gillespie, 1975, p.20]

These CATV systems extended the reach of broadcasters and were beneficial to the stations' audience expansion. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) did not impede the building of these early systems. The FCC did request CATV systems to register with them so that records could be kept.

Where cable started may be in question, but that it has grown is not in dispute. Baldwin and McVoy cite two sources to quantify this growth.

By 1961 there were 700 community antenna TV systems. Growth accelerated so that in 1971 there were 2,750 systems serving nearly six million homes [Sloan Commission, 1971]....In 1990 cable will pass 80% of U.S. households and be connected to more than 50% of all television households. Industry revenues will be about \$16 billion. [Shapiro and Schlosser]

The pioneering systems carried perhaps three broadcast signals into subscriber's homes. Currently cable television can carry 96 channels into the home and if fiber optic technology is used the number of signals can be even higher. This channel capacity is in sharp contrast to the scarce over-the-air broadcasting capability that is limited by the broad band width required for each station to be transmitted. In addition to the space needed for the signal, in order to eliminate neighboring channels from interfering with one another, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assigns alternate channels to an area, which in effect reduces the potential number of signals an area can have over the airwaves by one half. The broadcast channel scarcity has been the rationale for the FCC acting to license the broadcasters. The broadcaster's license mandates public service functions to be performed by the broadcasters since they have been allowed to use such a scarce public resource. What exactly the FCC means by "the public interest" is usually unclear. Nevertheless note that cable regulation does not follow this pattern.

Another important technical development that embellished the expansion of cable television was microwave technology and later satellite technology. With these technologies signals can be imported from great distances and fed into the local cable system. Thus the appeal of cable has changed over time from the clear signals needed in 1949 to increased number of programming choices for subscribers [Becker and Rafael, 1983; Jeffries, 1983; McDermott and Medhurst, 1984; Ducey, Krugman, and Eckrich 1983; as cited in White, 1988]. It is important to note that cable franchises are granted, in the U.S., by local governments. FCC regulations will be quoted in this report because they also impact on what the cable company may do. Cable is a local entity with a different contract between every local franchising authority and the cable company that has been awarded the franchise. Yet it is important to note that there are a number of multiple system operators (MSO) in the cable industry who have considerable corporate expertise in negotiating contracts compared to the cities and towns expertise in these negotiations. The ten largest MSOs have about 45% of cable subscribers.

During the 1950's the FCC did not regulate cable. But in the late 50's, when some cable systems began importing more distant TV signals via microwave relays to places already served by a local station, local broadcasters asked the FCC for protection from this infringement into their

licensed area. Advertising is sold on the basis of how large your audience is, and TV stations do not want to share their audience with anyone if they can help it. The FCC declined to regulate CATV at that time. The U.S. Congress and the judicial branch of government concurred in not restricting CATV in 1959 and 1960. But the FCC changed their stance in the 60's and denied the permitting of microwave pickup of distant television stations requested by Mountain Transmission Corp. in 1962. The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1963, and the microwave transmission of distant broadcast signals became subject to FCC regulation because it could hurt the local television station viewership.

FCC Regulates Cable

In 1968 the Supreme Court upheld the FCC's jurisdiction over cable television on the basis that it was "reasonably ancillary to the effective performance of the Commission's various responsibilities for the regulation of television broadcasting." (U.S. vs. Southwestern Cable Co. 1968 p. 178)... "At the same time the FCC began to describe a common carrier function for CATV that later developed into a reference to public access" [Kundanis, 1987]. For this study common carrier refers to communications carriers that

exercise no control over the content of what is communicated over their facilities; neither are they subject to any content regulation under the common carrier model is that service provider offers the communications facilities on a first-come first served basis. [U.S. vs. Southwestern Cable Co., 1968 as quoted in Kundanis, 1987]

Telephone companies are an example of telecommunications common carriers with regard to their phone lines. There is at this point in the history of public access just the notion that maybe others should have some access to these distributional lines.

There was a notice of proposed rule making in 1968 which stated that unused channels should be offered to allow the presentation of programming by others. It is not clear how the concept of public access got into the thinking of the FCC, but it has a conceptual history that will be addressed shortly. The FCC's 1969 rules for cable systems shifted away from protecting broadcasting and started to promote full development of cable technology. The new FCC rules required local origination for cable systems having 3500 or more subscribers. This requirement was mandated if a cable system wished to carry the signal of any television station.

Effective on and after January 1, 1971 no CATV system having 3500 or more subscribers shall carry the signal of any television broadcasting station unless the system also operates to a significant extent as a local outlet for cablecasting and has available facilities for local production and presentation of programs other than automated services. [First Report and Order 1969]

Public access was not mandated at this time, but the requirement of local origination provides a developmental link that established production facilities into local cable franchises.

Ten years earlier this request for local production would have clearly been unreasonable because of the equipment involved. Ten years prior to 1969 video gear was massive, heavy, expensive and required not only sophisticated operators but it needed sophisticated engineers to keep it tweaked. But by 1969, manufacturers had developed and marketed relatively low costing , easy to use video gear that didn't need a crane to be moved. This video equipment had already gotten into schools and was being used for educational purposes. It had also found users in the artistic community. The half-inch, open reel EIJA monochrome video tape recorders combined with single tubed vidicon camera was the equipment combination that made this request reasonable. The other development that allowed the resulting tapes to be played over the cable system with some degree of stability was the time base corrector.

In the summer of 1968, Sony, the Japanese electronics manufacturer, began marketing in America a low-cost, fully portable, videotape camera. Prior to this, videotape equipment was cumbersome, stationary, complex and expensive, even though it had been used commercially since 1956...Whereas tens of thousands of dollars were once needed to tool up for videotape, now only \$1,495 are required. [Shamberg, 1971, p.5]

The merger of this production possibility combined with the distribution capacity of cable enabled access to occur. Home Box Office didn't go on the satellites until 1975 and many cable operators did not get satellite dishes until the FCC said they could use the 4.5 meter size instead of the previously required, and much more expensive 10 meter size. It is important to note that there was not the competition of programming services that there is today. In the early days of cable there was excess capacity on many of the systems.

The 1969 Report and Order called only for local origination (LO). LO means programs would be made locally but it does not imply public access to this production or distribution capability. LO is done by the employees of the cable company and the content is controlled by the cable company. This is distinct from public access which will be defined shortly. The 1969 Report and Order did hint at the public's use of facilities when the Report and Order encouraged CATV systems to develop the service of operating as common carriers where clients could come in and use the studio to send their messages. Up to this point in time the cable systems were seen as distributors of signals that they chose to carry. With local origination they became a source of programming and if the common carrier concept were developed they would have no

control over the content of those channels. Although this local origination requirement was challenged by Midwest Video Corp. in 1972 (U.S. vs. Midwest Video Corp.) the Supreme Court supported the FCC.

Public Access Concept History

Public access refers to a channel or time on a channel set aside for use by the public. Anyone can exercise their freedom of speech and use this channel. No one can editorialize the content beyond the legal bounds of obscenity and libel. It is available on a first-come-first-served basis. Public access centers refer to the training and production facilities that are often connected with the public access channel. The channel is the distribution outlet. The access center provides the video production tools for those who do not have video production capability.

One of the first comprehensive studies of public access was written in 1975 by Gilbert Gillespie called Public Access Cable Television in The United States and Canada. The author cites as a source of public access programming the tradition of the "participatory" documentary film. This participatory idea started in 1922 when with Robert Flaherty had the idea of active participation by the subjects of a film into the film

making process. His 1922 film where this participation occurred was called Nanook of the North.

A seed for filmic revolution was dropped when Flaherty invited Nanook to participate in the decisions of production. [Gillespie, 1975, p.27]

Flaherty's Louisiana Story, filmed in 1946, also utilized the participatory mode. Flaherty was one of the guiding fathers of the documentary tradition at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). In 1967 there was an experiment by Ferand Dansereau in Jerome, Quebec which was described as a self study film. The community was to study itself through the process of making a film about their community. The Challenge for Change and the French-speaking counterpart called Societe Nouvelle were units of the NFB that were developed and funded in 1968. These units continued this participatory creative technique with experimentation with documentary subjects having input into the films that they made about their community. The idea of the project was to allow people to see their lives not just live it, and by seeing in this new way have them start to think of how to improve that life. Some of the units worked in economically depressed areas of Canada. They called the people working to get the community involved in the process 'social animators'.

Challenge for Change and Societe Nouvelle units seeded community communications groups all over the country (Canada) who produced local programs for CATV systems or VTR tapes for themselves." [Gwyn, 1972, as quoted in Gillespie, 1975, p.26]

George Stoney was an apprentice to this project. He has been called the grandfather of public access [Fuller, 1984]. He is given this credit because his pioneering role at the Alternate Media Center of New York University's School of Arts got him involved with public access in New York City and with the Berks TV Cable Television Company in Reading ,PA. Both of these efforts were breaking new ground.

The president of the parent company of Berks became interested in the Alternate Media Center and decided in 1971 to establish a pilot community access center. A goal of the center in Reading was to provide access to cable television channels to send messages for all segments of the community. With two portable video units and one staff member from the Alternate Media Center the experiment was established. A feature story in the local newspaper brought twenty people to begin learning to use the equipment [Broadcasting, 5/73, p.6]. Berks TV Cable Company purchased additional equipment including editing facilities, microphones and lights. The staff member also began exploring the programming needs of the community with neighborhood and community groups. The participatory social animator' model connection is in evidence with this effort. This can be said because of the active role the intern from the Alternate Media Center took in seeking out

community issues and community needs and trying to use programming to help get an airing of the concerns of the community.

It should be noted that there is evidence of an earlier effort documented in a report put out by the Rand Corporation which was authored by Feldman in 1970. He writes of an effort in Dale City, Virginia where the Jaycees accepted financial responsibility for the public channel on behalf of the community. The effort had a short life, from December 1968 to early 1970. Feldman writes that Dale City "...appears to be the first community operated closed-circuit television channel in the U.S." [Feldman, 1970, p.10-12 as cited in Gillespie, 1975] This effort had no social animators involved.

The franchises for cable granted in 1971 by the New York City government required in the contract that the cable system set aside 2 channels for community use [Gillespie, 1975 .p36]. But these channels were not production centers. To produce a message New Yorkers had 3 media centers that "operated on seed money from foundations" [O'Connor, 1972, cited in Gillespie, 1975, p.36]. One of those production centers was the Alternate Media Center.

The Alternate Media Center is almost messianic in spreading its gospel of the advent of the common man in the television that's soon to be upon us. [Broadcasting, 5/14/73, p.51]

Michael Shamberg, author of Guerrilla Television, was also a builder of the public access community television idea. In that book he documents a group called Raindance which started in 1969.

The original purpose and idea for Raindance (which came from Frank Gillette) was to explore the possibilities of portable video which was then less than a year old, and generally to function as a sort of alternate culture think-tank concentrating on media. [1975 p.37]

Movement toward community channels can be traced to the late 60's social movements, when

criticism of mass media was reaching a crescendo and cable television was being viewed as a panacea for the ills of the media and even society. [Schmidt, 1976, p.56]

White cites Schmidt further in his development of the environment that held growth for access and community radio systems.

Schmidt contends that during this decade the Supreme Court, in decisions that upheld the rights of individuals to use public places "as forums for dramatic...unsettling public expression" and strictly limited libel actions against public officials, began to seriously consider "public access" as integral to the definition of free speech. [1988, p. 23]

Fuller cites Horton's 1982 presentation in Boston at the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP) conference in her description of the history of the community access cable television movement:

Horton feels that the community access movement is part of a general media movement since the 1966 United Church of Christ vs. FCC decision giving citizens' groups the authority to intervene in license renewal proceedings, the development of Action for Children's Television and other consumer advocacy organizations, ...He distinguishes three different groups who converged in the video movement: video artists, counterculturalists, and community activists who saw television not only as a product but as a process tool. [1984, p.33]

Fuller continues to explore the history of the basis of access by citing Johnson and Gerlach. The biggest boost to the doctrine of outright access to the airwaves was when, according to Johnson and Gerlach, the Business Executives' Move for Vietnam Peace in the late sixties wanted to put a spot on radio against the Vietnam War and the station would not sell them the time on the grounds the station did not sell time for discussion of controversial issues. Fuller reports that this stance was supported by the FCC and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia in 1971 ruled that this was a violation of First Amendment rights and reversed that opinion [1984, p.33].

Hardenbergh makes a connection between public access and alternative radio efforts "alternative radio stations which by definition are similar to public access channels on cable television" [1985, p.32]

Barlow states:

The political and cultural ferment of the late 1960's and the early 1970's sparked an upsurge in community-oriented non-commercial radio

experiments throughout the United States.
[1988, p.91]

By extension one can see that the mood of the 60's could similarly affect public access cable television.

In 1970 the Sloan Commission of Cable Communication report depicted cable as a way to help solve communications problems. Their report included a suggestion for the development of public access channels to increase local involvement with issues [Feldman, 1970].

All of these experiments, media centers and written materials were in the environment but it is unclear if the FCC members were familiar with it all. Since they are a policy making body it is assumed that they at least tried to keep abreast of these developments. One piece of evidence was found: "The FCC in developing the Report and Order of 1972, used the Berks Community Cable and Alternate Media Center project as a guide [Ryan, 1986, p.31].

The 1972 Report and Order required, as a condition of carrying any broadcast signal on a cable system that was operating in whole or in part within a major television market, to have 4 kinds of access channels: educational, governmental, leased access channels and public access. The educational and governmental channels were to be under the editorial control of the appropriate government

functionary. The leased access channels were to be available for paid commercial use. It is the public access channels that is of interest in this report. The public access channel was open to the public for non-commercial communication.

The reasons for requiring public access were stated in the Report and Order: "to offer a practical opportunity to participate in community dialogue through a mass medium." (p. 191) Not only was the channel to be provided to the public free of charge but production costs of studio productions of less than 5 minutes were to be free of charge. According to Henry Geller, General Counsel to the FCC 1964-1970, and Lampert "These regulations sought to promote the First Amendment goal of diversity through the 'multiplicity of viewpoints' which should occur if all are given access..." (p. 607) as quoted from Kundanis [FCC Report and Order 1972,p.607.]. A community could always ask for access channels as a condition of the franchise but this FCC requirement mandated these channels for certain cable systems even if the local community never mentioned wanting access channels.

The access requirement created a mandated basis for access but it is unclear how many access operations it spawned. There is no source found in the research done that documents the growth of public access with year to

year counts of access centers or channels. Further research, possibly through the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, might provide this information. Currently the count of public access channels is roughly pegged at 2000. There may well be more than one access channel in a community so that in terms of communities with public access the number cited is 600 [Carter, 1990].

During 1972, in Austin, Texas a group of access advocates from the University of Texas at Austin cited the current FCC rulings on cable television and public access capabilities to argue for an access channel. This was done even though the cable company was not required to provide access capabilities because Austin was not a major market. They were granted their request for the use of a channel [White, 1988, p.45]. One can imagine that similar occurrences were happening in other cities around the country. Gillespie's research published in 1975 was directly connected with the 1972 FCC Report and Order mandate:

...designed to gain a general impression of how governments of major cities surveyed are responding to their new responsibility of facilitating the wiring of their cities... specifically public access community television. [1975, p.94]

Through a survey sent to the office of mayors in 150 cities in North America, in March 1973 he found 10% of the 105 responding cities were producing public access community

television (PACT) programming. This needs to be seen in light of the fact that 66 of the 105 responding cities did not even have cable. [Gillespie, 1975, p.94]

On the other hand, the following, which indicates that access was not in a full steam ahead mode, was found in Ryan's work:

Despite the FCC mandating of the access channel, many individual cable companies took a wait and see attitude toward the allocation and development of access channels. In those areas where one or more individuals were willing to give freely of their time and energy public access organizations became a viable production element within the community. [1986, p.34]

Access had been given its 'official' birth by the FCC in 1972 but its organic or conceptual birth goes back much further.

Access, though it seemed like a good idea to the FCC and other advocates, had its concerned observers. It is a critical attribute of public access that no control of content could be exercised by the cable company or the access center itself for that matter. Public access was to be offered on a first-come-first-served, non-discriminatory basis. These concerns were found by Gillespie in his 1975 report to be largely unfounded.

There is little indication from the various sources of information for the study that fear of pornographic, indecent, and libelous programming will present a barrier to the viability of the public access community television idea... [1975, p.60]

Gillespie's prediction has not turned out to be entirely true. Davis writes: "In Kansas City last fall, the City Council closed down its access channels rather than permit the Klan to continue airing its vitriolic discussion series, 'Race and Reason.' [1989, Section 2, p.31]" This programming was neither obscene nor libelous, just unacceptable. Other communities are dealing with this issue in other ways; in Austin, Texas: "Again ACTV compromised by scheduling 'Race' (a KKK program) late at night and running a disclaimer before the program." [White, 1988, p.64]

In the mid-1970's satellite delivery of programming services revolutionized the cable industry. Home Box Office-type services caused new growth for cable. Cities involved in the franchising process sought more access facilities and access support from vying cable companies. A 1979 National City Committee for Broadcasting reported the existence of 53 access centers in the U.S. [Ledingham, 1983, p.5.].

Sketch of a Typical Access Effort

In the earlier years of access most access production centers were operated by cable companies [Ledingham, 1983, p.20]. They housed the equipment, trained the public on

its use, and scheduled and ran the programs on the public access channels. There are other options for structuring public access. Besides the cable company running access itself the other three options are 1) access can be run by another institution in the community such as a college or a public library; 2) access can be run by a separate non-profit organization that is formed to administer public access for the city or town; 3) the local government can run access itself. With any of the options mentioned above the franchise authority usually creates a cable advisory board for the city. This would be a city committee like the Board of Health.

The Cable Advisory Board would help the franchising authority with the over-all management and supervision of all the provisions in the contract with the cable company. They would deal with complaints that come through the city from customers who are not satisfied with the efforts of the cable company to resolve a problem they have. The Cable Advisory Board would also oversee contractual details like system construction completion dates as promised in the contract.

The NFLCP prepared a document in 1983 which compares 8 cities in terms of the functioning of their Cable Board and Commissions [NFLCP, 1982]. The duties from one city to another are quite similar. One duty that was given to the

Cincinnati Cable Commission was to develop criteria for measuring the impact of cable on "quality of life." There was quite a bit of debate on how to carry out this task because of the committee's inability to define 'quality of life.' In frustration they decided to let the public decide what it meant. As a result of this charge the commission conducts a survey each year and asks, among other things, if the quality of their life has been improved as a result of having cable television [Chapman, 1990].

The Cable Advisory Board would also make recommendations to the city manager or mayor regarding public access. There may be other access channels such as an education and government access channels and the Cable Advisory Board would supervise all of these with the final responsibility/ authority resting with the franchising authority. The educational channel might be run by the School Committee, but it would still be overseen by the Cable Advisory Board.

There are several forms that public access can take in a community. It can be housed in a cable company office and staffed by cable company employees or it can be a separate non-profit organization, or the access center can be one that serves several communities not just one or public access can be equipment sitting in an office

somewhere like the Fire Department, to be used when someone asks for it.

There is currently a trend to organize new access systems using the separate non-profit organization structure. This has come about because of the need to isolate access from the influence of any one organization and from the politics of city government. [Jesuale, 1982, p.88]

Typically the access effort in a community has a production component and a scheduling component. In some communities the cable company limited the access role to playing tapes that were delivered to their office. Other companies got more involved by providing professional people to train and assist access users on the access equipment provided. Some of this was done on the company's initiative; on the other hand, most access centers exist in communities where they are mandated as a requirement of the franchise agreement.

To use public access distribution systems, all a resident of a town need do is ask that the tape be played and fill out an application assuring the the program is not commercial, obscene, or libelous. Some access centers give preference to scheduling programs produced by local people. An organization from outside the community can not typically send a tape and ask it to be played; a resident must request it.

Production of access programming can utilize non-access television production equipment. If an access producer wants to use the center's equipment the process usually starts by the producer filling out an application form and receiving the rules of the access center. Some centers require membership and a small membership fee (\$5-\$25 per year). Some centers limit membership to residents of the town and even to households that subscribe to cable service. The rules of most centers require those who wish to use the equipment to receive training (usually free of charge) or to pass a competency test based on the use of the equipment. Workshops on the use of equipment typically cover camcorder use, editing, and studio techniques. Any one of the workshops would usually meet for 3-6 three hour sessions. Lest this start to sound like it is all very structured, let it be pointed out that Hardenbergh's research found 2/3 of the producers associated with the 4 channels she studied intending the channels to have an "unstructured" access organization. They often stated that they would "not give up their freedom for structure" [1985, p.85]. Some access centers use more of an apprenticeship approach and try to get newly involved members 'on the job training' by having them work with experienced producers.

Levels of funding, equipment quantity and quality and professional support vary a great deal from access effort to access effort. It depends on what was negotiated and the follow through on those terms. A description that is typical of the variety is found in Janes [1987]. He writes of several communities including New York City, Portland, ME, East Lansing, MI, Sommerville, MA ,and New Rochelle, NY. He gives an outline of how the access effort is funded, how it is structured and with some cities a brief outline of some of the triumphs and challenges the access efforts have faced in the past. Some of the communities have public access run by separate non-profit organizations, others have access run by the cable operator.

Janes points out that "the scope of a community's access experience is affected by a number of factors" [1987, p.18]. These include when the franchise was granted. If franchised during a time of intense competition, more access concessions can usually be attained. Yet Janes is quick to also point out that promises were made by cable companies and not kept. Supporting this contention an article was found in Channels which stated that one of the ways the cable industry was staying healthy in the lean times of 1985 was by cutting back on public access [Leddy, 1985, p.34]. Further support of this pattern of not keeping promises are found in

Broadcasting. The articles found had dates ranging from 1972 to 1982 which testifies that the pattern was not only present but was not confined to a short span of time [Broadcasting, 1972; Brown, 1981; Stoller, 1982]. Janes [1987] describes situations where agreements were 'interpreted' by cable companies in such a way as to not provide separate facilities for public access which led to problems. The presence of an "activist" group in the community "pushing" for access is sometimes a necessary factor. He also notes that a secure source of funding is a factor in the scope of a community's access experience.

FCC Rules Changed and Challenged

The FCC modified the 1972 rules in 1976 to ensure public access to cable systems of a designated size and to regulate the manner in which access was provided. (1976 Report and Order 59 FCC 2nd 294) This modification made the access requirement applicable only to cable systems with more than 3500 subscribers. Some cable operators opposed the public access channels. The FCC acknowledged these complaints but stood fast.

The 1976 access rules were challenged in court in 1977 (FCC vs. Midwest Video Corp., 1979) This case became known as Midwest II. In this case the cable company's lawyer

argued that "the requirement to provide channels would cut into the cable operator's capability of using programming available to the industry at a time when the volume and variety of such programming is growing rapidly." The justices asked questions in an attempt to determine whether Congress could impose access rules on newspapers or on broadcasters and if not how could it be imposed on cable. Broadcasting also notes in this article that the National Cable Television Association filed a friend of the court brief on behalf of Midwest Video; this is evidence that the Midwest's position was supported by the cable industry [Broadcasting, 1979]. The Supreme Court struck down the access rules on jurisdictional basis. The First Amendment rights of cable companies to program what they wanted on their system, instead of what the public access producers wanted, was being used in Midwest's case, but the court did not rule on this basis. The Supreme Court ruled on jurisdictional basis; they decided that the FCC did not have the jurisdiction to require access channels [Kundanis, 1987].

The FCC could no longer mandate public access. Of course cities were still free to ask for it as a condition of the franchise. In places where access was opposed by the cable operators this ruling gave grounds for discontinuing the access effort. But many cable operators were deriving public relations benefits from public access

and therefore continued to support it. Any franchise agreement that had public access written in as a condition of the franchise with the city was also safe from dismantling for that contractual agreement still stood. It was only the access centers that came into existence because of the FCC mandate that were put on shaky ground with this 1979 ruling.

The concept and philosophy of public access received little press from the professional television magazines. A few articles in Channels were found that explain, comment on and even advocate public access [Talen, 1981; Brown, 1983; Brown, 1984]. Whereas Broadcasting can be counted on to report legislative and judicial happenings, no instance of feature stories advocating or even describing a case history of an access effort was found. Broadcasting sticks very much to the pure model of trying to report the news as a set of facts.

Challenges to local control can be seen in cases brought to court during the 1980's. Some of these court cases dealt directly with alleviating the cable companies of access obligations. As early as 1982, Les Brown of Channels magazine observed "cable companies want to make money not social impact." He considers the cable companies' desire to gain full control of all of their system's channels a "shameless" use of the First Amendment

as a basis of argument because it would take away the possibility of a free speech outlet for many voices.

[Brown, 1982]

Cable Communications Act of 1984

The Cable Communications Act of 1984 dealt with several emerging issues. One was the economic viability of some cable systems, for by this time the cable industry was in competition with the home VCR and the video rental store where the public could rent movies on video cassette, as well as competition from home satellite services. Some cable systems had promised cities more than their financial reality could allow them to deliver. A case in point is the New Orleans franchise discussed by David Stoller in an article he wrote in 1982. In New Orleans the contract had the cable company providing 18 public access channels, six local studios and one mobile production van. When the article was written, all of these promised items were long overdue. In fact the cable company had run into problems such that the city was largely still not wired for cable. The author explains the pattern of overpromising this way: "To win one of the big plums, you simply promise the moon and pay no attention to whether it fits in with the business plan" [Stroller, 1982]. Federal cable legislation was sought to deal with this issue. It was also sought to settle the challenges to local regulatory authority that

had been evidenced in the court cases mentioned before. The legislation that was passed confirmed local authority to regulate cable [Kundanis, 1987]. Local franchising authorities can still request public access as a feature they want on their system.

The Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984 is the legislative equivalent to a birth right for cable television. Before the Cable Act, cable television was treated as ancillary to broadcasting. [Kundanis, 1987, p.119]

This piece of legislation emphasized the franchise process over which local governments had and continue to have authority. It does put limits on the local authority. It reconfirms the local franchise negotiation process for it requires a cable operator to have a franchise to provide service. The current status of public access at the federal level is dictated in this act. Some states have decided to regulate cable at that level and it is usually handled by the state utilities commission.

There have been some court cases challenging local governments to allow a competing company to over-build an existing cable system but the local governments have resisted this contending that cable is a natural monopoly and that a second system could jeopardize the integrity of the over-built cable system.

The Cable Act also allows franchising authorities to enforce the requirements for access channels as well as access production centers. The House Committee on Energy and Commerce, where the legislation developed, recognizes the conflict between cable operator's First Amendment rights and the public's First Amendment rights. The conflict is that if you give a channel to the public the cable operator is not free to put what they want on that channel.

One of the reasons that cable companies want the access channels returned to their control is that over the years, what started as an over abundance of channels that they did not have programming for, has changed into a market where there are many programming services available. The cable company could possibly put on a service that could make money for them. But those potential profits can not be realized if they have no channel to put the new services on.

Nevertheless the House Committee on Energy and Commerce explains and recommits to the goal of keeping access in order to foster the availability of a "diversity of viewpoints" for the audience. The Committee writes that "the public access channels are the video equivalent of the speaker's soapbox" [as cited in Kundanis, 1987, p.169]

In spite of this clear indication of policy in the Cable Communications Act of 1984 there have been many reported court cases where the cable companies are using the First Amendment at the basis for gaining control of all their system's channels. In 1987 Broadcasting reported on a Federal District Court judgment where it was ruled that access channels requirements violate cable's First Amendment rights. The case involved Century Communications Inc. and three California Cities. Broadcasting quoted Harold Farrow, Century's attorney as saying of the ruling:

It's one more step down the road to producing the [cable operator's] right to be in business and to stay in business...without some son of a bitch at city hall telling you how to run your business. [Broadcasting, 9/7/87]

Also in 1987, Broadcasting described a report that was soon to be published in Communications Lawyer which states "Local franchise of cable television has developed into a licensing of the press." The author of the report argues that cities, by not allowing overbuilds of cable systems, are denying cable companies their First Amendment rights [Broadcasting, 12/87]. In 1988 Broadcasting reported that yet another cable system, in Erie, Pennsylvania, was claiming before the courts that the fees demanded of it by the city violated its constitutional guarantee of free press. The appeal also attacked, as a violation of the First Amendment, the city access fee plan which requires the cable system to provide special funds, channels, training, services and equipment for government and public

access programming. In reaction to all these First Amendment cases the National League of Cities planned to set as a top priority pressing for federal legislation to immunize municipalities against First Amendment challenges of their franchising authority [Broadcasting, 1/88]. The cities can not afford to fight expensive legal battles with cable companies.

Going against the flow of First Amendment cases where cable companies seek to gain control of all channels, one article was found that may indicate that there are still some cable operators that can see some benefit to access. Broadcasting reported that Robert Thomson of TCI addressed a gathering of The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers and sought advice from them on public access. He suggested that cable companies and access concerns work together since "cable can offer viewers and access groups something DBS or MMDS cannot, dedicated public access channels with a strong local flavor" [Broadcasting, 4/88, p.101]. It may be that the threat from these other technologies finally gets cable operators to realize the unique value that access can provide to the local franchise. The access channel is akin to the local paper. There are a certain number of people who are interested in receiving this locally produced material. Access producers can provide local programming to the cable company without paying those producers for it. If the cable company

produced the equivalent amount of programming using paid help instead of access volunteers their expenses, in my estimation, would be quite a bit higher. The other technologies are not likely to offer local selectmen meetings on their satellite, therefore cable might be able to use the local programming as a distinctive feature which could be useful in marketing. In general if a product is not distinguishable from another the only marketing feature that can be used to lure customers is a lower price. So if cable offers local programming and DBS does not then the two products are not in direct competition. Most marketing managers would prefer to be in a non-direct competition situation so as to preserve a niche that only their product can fill.

The cable act does provide for the use of the access channel by the operator if it is not being used for access. The cable operator may use this channel capacity set aside for access if it is not being used for its designated purpose. The Cable Act makes it clear that access channels can be gotten back from the operator when such access use is developed. To protect funds for access facilities the act separates those payments from the franchise fee that the cable operator pays and specifically says that the fee does not include the capital costs of buying equipment for access centers. The franchise fees paid to the local government can go up to 5% of the gross

profit of a franchise [Ricks and Wiley, 1985]. Basically the local government uses these fees to help support the local access effort if there is no other provision in the contract for support of access. In fact, with regard to the franchise fee, in order to be constitutional it "must be used to operate the cable system" [Meyerson, 1985]; those monies can not constitutionally go into general funds of the municipality, although two sources have told me that this often happens. They state that it is very difficult to enforce or even keep track of [Carter, 1990; Hoos, 1990]. This point is a critical one for attaining secure funding for access efforts from cities through the franchise fee. If the city can, or does, use the franchise fee money for other items, access is placed in a more tenuous fiscal position.

Mr. Geller, Director of Duke University's Center for Public Policy, wrote and circulated among key members of Congress a paper whose intention, as reported by Broadcasting, was to "stir up suits against cities" if they were not using the franchise fee correctly. Geller's paper stated that if franchise revenue collected by cities from cable companies were used for general revenue purposes it violated the First Amendment. Geller cites the 1983 Minneapolis Star Supreme Court case for support. In that case the state had imposed a tax on ink and newsprint and the high court held that "putting a special burden on a

news medium, with its special First Amendment rights, can stand only if necessary to achieve an overriding governmental interest" [Broadcasting, 5/86, p. 11] and where the state was using the tax as a general revenue raising device other means were available to achieve that objective.

There have been some significant strides in the progress of spreading information about access through The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers (NFLCP).

In 1976, a group of those persons who were involved with the Alternative Media Center cable internship project, realizing that the project would soon be ending and vitally aware of the critical need to continue and expand the information and programming exchange fostered by the project, created the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. [Janes, 1987]

They have helped local authorities deal with the cable companies. The cable companies were usually quite sophisticated in their strategies when it came to the franchising process but more and more local governments are bringing in consultants and lawyers knowledgeable about cable to protect the interests of the city in the franchising process.

The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers was formed in 1977. The organization serves as a clearinghouse for information, assists community producers in developing ideas for local programming, serves as a lobby organization for the access movement. The NFLCP also conducts conferences and produces a quarterly newsletter, the Community Television Review. In helping people learn from each others's successes and failures, the NFLCP has made a substantial contribution to the public access movement. [Janes, 1987, p.17]

As part of NFLCP's educational mission they offer a number of publications and videotapes on the subject of access television ranging from policy information to copyright procedures.

The organization is proud that it has helped the access movement prosper. In a NFLCP brochure the organization writes:

As a result of NFLCP's influence in the access and local cable programming movement, hundreds of cities and counties have public educational and municipal access programming. When NFLCP was formed in 1976, less than 100 community cable programming centers existed in the United States. Today that number has risen to more than 1,200.
[NFLCP brochure received 10/90]

This certainly sounds like progress, but it is difficult to calibrate the progress. It can be compared to FCC data for 1981 which indicate that at least 75% of all cable systems in the United States do not have even one governmental, educational or public access channel [Noam, 1981]. On the other hand it can be compared to the growth of community radio stations. Barlow reports:

In 1975 there were 25 community radio stations represented at the founding of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB)... The number of stations rose to 65 in 1980.
[Barlow, 1988, p.96]

At least one author was found who feels that the growth has been slow. Her determination is made in light of the fact that public access "has not grown as rapidly as cable itself" [Kennedy, 1984].

One other development is worth noting in the history of public access. Since 1986 Deep Dish T.V. Network has been distributing the best of grassroots and independent media to public access channels via satellite. It is currently carried by more than 300 public access channels nationwide. Their pamphlet states that they are devoted to the democratizing the media by providing a national forum via television for programs made by community groups and independent producers. When one looks at their literature, it is quite clear that they see themselves as an alternative media source. "Community members dare to cover issues that newspapers won't. Tired of the Old Boys' Networks? So Are We..." [promotional material received 9/90]. I haven't seen anything written in the academic literature with regard to this new effort except as a brief mention [White, 1988, p.67], though it has appeared in the NFLCP's publication Community Television Review [Rogoff, 1990].

Summary

This brief history of public access was written to gain a sense of where public access came from. Access is one of the most interesting developments in cable television because it is unlike commercial broadcasting, and because of its connection with the concept of free expression that Americans cherish.

Public access's federal regulatory history officially started in 1972 when the FCC mandated that cable companies operating in whole or in part of a major market to have a public access channel. This channel was to provide community dialogue through the mass media. It should be noted that there were a few public access efforts going at that time which were not mandated by the FCC. The FCC regulations were modified in 1976. The access requirement was changed to apply only to cable systems with more than 3,500 subscribers. The federal regulations were short lived for in 1979 the Supreme Court struck down the access rules on jurisdictional basis. It was then left to local communities to request public access in their franchise agreements. The Cable Communications Act of 1984 confirmed local authority to regulate cable within certain parameters. This includes the right of a local government to request public access on their system. So at this point in time in the United States access is requested and regulated at the local level.

There are a number of cases reported in the chapter where cable companies have gone to court to try to regain control of the public access channel. When cable had excess channel capacity giving a channel to public access was not a problem for the cable operator. As programming became the major marketing drive behind cable subscription

sales the cable companies wanted to have every channel they could so as to offer programming they felt people would be willing to subscribe to receive. There is also evidence in this chapter which suggests that there is a history of broken promises on the part of cable companies with regard to public access.

Conceptually public access developed from the participatory documentary film tradition. The development of public access cable television was facilitated by television technology changes which provided less cumbersome and less expensive television production equipment. The social concerns of the late 60's also added to the forces that helped form public access. The Alternate Media Center and the interns involved with the center helped define what public access was to become. They spread the message that common folks could produce their own television programs. The NFLCP is a professional organization that has emerged to continue to promote the concept of local cable programming.

The number of communities with public access is currently estimated at 600. The sketch of a typical public access cable television effort is difficult to draw because it all depends on what was negotiated in the contract and on the follow through on those terms. Most efforts include channel time for distributing programming, a scheduling

component as well as a production center which offers equipment and training.

This history has presented an outline of the context in which access emerged and grew but it does not provide much information on what communities have done with access. The literature review will get into what the research tells us of how the experiment in public access is manifesting itself.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review is structured to begin to answer the basic research question of my thesis: How should and can public access efforts be evaluated? The word 'success' is used often in the literature, especially in the 'how to books' and in case histories. Some effort is needed to define and set measurable parameters for success otherwise it will have little meaning.

Topics found in the literature developed into subtitles for this chapter. Those topics are: the potential of public access cable television, audience studies, access producers, the quality of access programming, the quantity of access programs, local content of public access programming and the training of public access producers. Such an analysis provides a perspective of how public access has been studied and measured in past research. It also offers a basis on which to develop a set of questions to ask of public access concerns to see how, or if, they

are evaluating public access efforts in the normal course of events.

It is hoped that this research will reveal how current access efforts are delineating the successful from the unsuccessful access effort. It is also hoped that the study will expand the understanding of why evaluation in the public access environment is difficult to carry out in a meaningful way.

Public Access Cable Television Potential

The historical content that has preceded this literature review gives a perspective to how the spread of cable technology, the development of low cost tools, the mood of the 60's, FCC mandates and Supreme Court cases and organizations devoted to the development of cable access combined to facilitate the occurrence of public access television. The FCC public access mandate of 1972 (since rescinded) which called for diversity, localism and citizen-production on a nondiscriminatory, first come first served basis is a starting point for discussing potential.

Some authors view access as a most important extension of our freedom of speech in light of the fact that neither print, radio nor broadcast television extend a non-censored

invitation for individual expression. Gillespie [1975] has described access as an apology to a nation for controlling all the other media. Others have written about access's ability to encourage local residents to examine and critique the television medium itself [Buske, 1983]. Helleck [1984] Church [1987] and Huie [1987] have also referred to this de-mystification of television. Building on democratic principles through the exchange of information has been articulated as a potential role access could play a part in by Clemens,[1980-81] Alderson,[1988] and Katz [1985]. Communicating to solve problems between members of a community [Feldman, 1970; Sloan Commission on Cable Communication, 1971] has been written about. Access's unique ability to focus upon the local community has been pointed out by some authors [Gillespie, 1975; Moss and Warren, 1984]. Clearly, access seemed like a good idea to lots of people. These documents leave little doubt that the idea of public access had much potential and had piqued the imagination of a number of people. On the whole these authors do not articulate any negative aspects of what can happen as a result of public access cable television.

Access as a production potential, or as a distribution channel, can be used in many diverse ways. Edward R. Morrow said of television itself:

This instrument can teach, it can illuminate;yes, it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans are determined to use it to those ends. Otherwise it is merely lights and wires in a box.

These words are inscribed on the Alfred duPont Award for broadcast journalism [Winship, 1988]. But with such a broad potential how do we begin to evaluate or analyze access efforts? What criteria or data have been used to determine whether the label of 'successful' would be used when describing an access effort?

At the most basic level public access must exist in a community for there to be the potential of successful public access efforts. Some writers used the term successful when writing of this basic level of survival or existence of the access effort in the community. Buske & Oringel [1987] refer to a successful center by contrasting it to a center that is always struggling to 'keep in business'. Others have made it clear that existence is not enough. Janes [1987], and Carpenter-Huffman, et al. [1974] write that providing funding, channel space and equipment does not guarantee the long-term viability of individual access efforts for it does not guarantee that access producers will come forward, get involved and trained and will follow through on completing a program. The equipment may sit in a closet being available but in fact may not ever get used.

Merely increasing the number of systems that have access may be the goal of the NLFCP and they have a large task set before them since Moss and Warren [1984] reported that less than 10% of systems had public access. For such a goal of increasing the occurrence of access mere existence may be a viable measure but this will not suffice when looking at what access is doing in a community or in a situation where public access must justify its existence and expense to nonsupporters. These nonsupporters may be cable companies who do not want to turn over the funding for access or they may be subscribers who do not want to pay extra money to support public access or it may be viewers from a community who are confronted with controversial programming that they do not think should be allowed on.

Many contributors to the literature have written on what to do to be a successful access center but they do not specify what success is [McIntosh, 1985; Neustadt & Miller, 1982; Buske & Oringel, 1987]. Merely following the guidelines set forth by these authors can not in themselves result in a determination of 'successful'.

As an illustration, consider what Neustadt and Miller [1982] contributed to A Guide to Local Policy wherein they say that a good access center should:

- separate access from government

- fairly allocate space on the access channel
- have equitable procedures for allocating facilities
- provide a forum for public input into policy
- insure that training and technical assistance is available to all sectors of the community
- initiate public education and outreach to insure use of the resources committed
- have clear, published criteria for distributing funds
- have an access authority to implement the criteria
- establish an appeals process for user complaints
- initiate an going needs assessment process
- establish policies to prevent obscene and slanderous programming from being funded

These lists speak of what an access center should do. An access center could do everything on the list and still be an unsuccessful effort by many possible determinates. Their material does not articulate what the results of those efforts should be. It is like saying teachers should teach. But the results of a teacher's efforts needs to be learning on the part of the students. The teaching is not an end in itself. The point that comes closest to suggesting some sort of result is expected on the above list is the point that suggests an educational outreach so as to insure use of the committed resources. Would one use per year be enough? Also note that audience measurement is not included on the list.

Access Audience Studies

A review of access audience studies reveals that their most common purpose is to ascertain the percentage of people aware of public access television and the frequency of watching public access programming. Rood [1977], in one of the earliest audience studies, measured audience levels in several cable systems in Michigan. He mailed a survey to a randomly selected sample of subscribers and based his results on the 49.7% response rate he received. He was unable to find access programming to measure and resorted to a use of local origination programming that was being produced by the local cable company that he found was 'like access.' He delineates access as being produced by members of the public with their editorial control whereas local origination is produced by cable company staff with editorial control exerted by the cable company. He estimated that audience for series programs ranged from 11% to 54% of the subscribers surveyed. That is the percentage of respondents who reported that they watched a particular series "often" or "sometimes." All of the measurements for audience on cable are cumulative and do not use the ratings system of broadcast television that report who is watching at a given moment in time. Rood's study concluded that the FCC was doing little to enforce its mandate of access

television. The study also suggests categories of programs that appear to attract the larger audiences and the smaller audiences. Local parades were the most popular followed by "Meet Your Candidate" and high school basketball shows. The underlying message is that audience size is important. In 1975 Johnson and Agostino, using a survey, found that .2% of all TV viewing in Columbus, Indiana was access viewing. When stated this way viewership seems all but non-existent.

A cumulative approach with regard to audience was used in a 1986 telephone survey study in Trempealeau County, Wisconsin which found that 87% of all cable subscribers were aware of community programming and 63% of all cable subscribers were weekly viewers of the community channel. This study was done to determine the extent to which the programming efforts of the Extension Service in that region were being watched. The title of the article was "Is Anyone Watching?" The conclusion of the author [Lang] was that there were sufficient audiences to warrant continued programming. But a clear analysis which states criteria used for coming to this conclusion or a justification on the basis of comparing costs and audience of live extension service workshops versus cable casting of programs was absent. Also absent was information on how the 239 people who were surveyed by phone were selected.

Goss in 1978 studied the Manhattan audience and found that 50% of that audience was aware of the access channels. Her research utilized a telephone survey method in which 400 cable subscribers responded. 33% of those that were aware of the access channel had watched an access program. White [1988] mentions five audience studies that are only available through NFLCP. These represent local efforts to find out if programming is being watched. He does not go into the methodology used in these five studies but four of the studies refer to surveys in their title. Hardenbergh in 1985 used a case study approach to research four public access channels in Connecticut. Part of her study was an audience study that utilized a random sample of 400 cable subscribers who were surveyed by phone. She found over half of the respondents had viewed public access channels. Of those that had watched public access programming, over half stated that they rarely watched while the remainder said they watched one to two programs per week. Fuller reports the phone survey part of her results in her case history research done in Longmeadow, MA. For this she used cable subscribers as the population and found:

An impressive 94% of the sample claimed familiarity with public access ...45% are 'fairly regular' viewers of the channel, watching at least a few times a month. [1984, p.142]

Jamison in 1985 reported on cable subscribers in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He designed a survey to predict the market attitudes of cable subscribers. He also hoped the design might be used as the model for national use. No evidence was found that it has been used elsewhere. He used a telephone survey method with 384 surveys needed for a valid sampling. He found that 86% were aware of access programming and 62% said they had watched the community access programming in the last two weeks. Another study that included a telephone survey of the audience was conducted by Banks and Porter [1987]. It was done in the suburbs and city of Milwaukee and found 51.8% of all respondents (non-cable subscribers and cable subscribers) said they were aware of public access in their community, of those, 7% watched it weekly, 10% watched rarely, 16% watched occasionally and 64% reported that they never watched public access.

Working through the audience studies, three studies dated in 1988 were found that reported on the audience for access programs. In Austin, Texas, White [1988] conducted a telephone survey of 425 cable subscribers as part of his case history research. He found that 71.8% of cable subscribers were aware that there were access channels on the cable system and 58% of these people reported viewing some community access programming at least once a month. This awareness level can be compared to an earlier study

done in Austin in 1984 that reported a 33% awareness. Atkin and LaRose [1988] did audience research using the data from a national quarterly survey which uses telephone surveys to collect data. A sample of 1000 was reportedly used in the national quarterly survey. Their objective was to determine the satisfaction level of over 30 programming services. They found 16% of the total population in a regionally diversified sample reported viewing a community access channel within the week before they were interviewed. They included in their definition of community channel public, educational and government access as well as leased access channels. The third audience study to come out in 1988 was in Boston. An audience survey jointly commissioned by Cablevision Inc. and Boston Community Access and Programming Foundation Inc. (BCAPF) was conducted. The survey was done by Marquest, a market research company which specializes in local cable audience research. The survey indicated that there was a 56% awareness among cable subscribers of the community access channel and that 45% had watched 3 or more programs in the past month on the community access channel. This report noted that Marquest is not used to seeing numbers as high as 45% for viewing the local cable access channels.

It is important to note that because each community's access system is different, survey results are difficult to compare. One community might have several access channels;

one for government, one for public access and one for education. In other communities all three access functions are combined on one shared channel. A related issue that comes up is that viewers have had a difficult time distinguishing public access from local origination in communities that have both services. This is not surprising since even the professionals and volunteers involved do not agree on definitions and the quality of some access surpasses the quality of local origination and both access and local origination usually have a distinctly home grown flavor. When a report states results it is often unclear if the survey made distinctions between these types of community programming. Another difficulty in comparison comes into play when some results are reported using the entire town as the population while other research uses only cable subscribers as the population. Rates of penetration are needed to be able to compare results.

So what do these audience numbers mean? Is audience size important for public access channels? If so, what size audience is enough for public access to be deemed successful? Others have asked a related question before:

Do ratings serve the viewing public's interest?
The first answer is that, so far as can be
ascertained, no one has proposed an alternative
feedback system. [Belville, 1988, p.237]

Traditional broadcast television is driven by the ratings. Public access is a very different kind of television with different economic underpinnings. Huie [1987] wrote a clear description of some of the differences:

Broadcast television is driven, of course by the commercial imperative to maximize the viewing audience for commercial messages. The format and content of programming as well as the accepted styles and practices of program production are largely determined by this commercial imperative. Cable systems are financed more by subscriber fees than by advertising. The economic necessity to maximize viewers on any given channel is thus reduced. Nevertheless, cable systems generally regard the "giving up" of channels for access use as an economic sacrifice. In theory, however, nothing prevents cable companies from promoting access channels as a benefit to subscribers, thus turning these channels into potential sources of revenue. Community access, on the other hand, is driven by a different force- something one might call a "communicational" imperative. Community access, as mentioned earlier, exists as a manifestation of the idea that the media of telecommunication should, by being accessible to everyone, encourage citizen participation in the Democratic Dialogue.[1987, p.52]

Banks and Porter agree on the economic position of access: "cable access is virtually independent of the economic marketplace." [1987, p.3] That is to say access does not depend on revenue from advertisers to fund the production of programs. Therefore there is less pressure and concern regarding how many people are watching compared with a broadcast channel's concern about audience size.

Researchers of access television felt that audience size was important enough to be studied. Did they feel this was important based on the mind set of the broadcast model that we are used to? There are a number of voices in the literature that make statements about the importance of audience size. Some writers are more forceful in presenting their viewpoint than others. At one level if there is no audience for a program, it has been noted by Buske and Oringel [1987] that programming will be made "in vain." Halleck comments on the audience by writing:

How long this (access) will continue depends on how large a constituency the access activists and programmers can muster.[1984, p.313]

Atkins and LaRose [1988] note that marginal audiences is one factor that has prompted several communities to reconsider their commitment to access programming and in their study they decided:

Attention will be focused on viewership, however, as it is felt to be the most commonly held measure of community channel performance.[1988, p.7]

Access in Action [1985] is a thin volume on the NFLCP reading list which describes it self as a practical guide for improving video skills. It devotes one of its 79 pages to publicity. To be included in such a thin volume conveys a message that promotion, to gain a larger audience, must not be forgotten. On the other hand material was found in White that indicated that the NFLCP did not feel such measurements should be used:

From a policy perspective, representatives of various municipalities and spokespeople at The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers maintain that the "success" of a given access system cannot be judged by audience size or for that matter, any measure of usage. As a theoretical matter, however, the audience for and usage of access services is an important area for media studies; on a more practical level, access systems need information on viewership and usage to more effectively promote their services; moreover, recent franchise challenges by some cable operators suggest that municipalities may be forced to in some way justify the financial support they receive and this kind of research is one way of documenting access usage. [1988, p.10]

Baldwin and McVoy, after discussing the various approaches to account for access programming efforts, point out that evaluation would violate the concept of public access.

The vitality, the uniqueness, the informative and entertainment value, and other benefits of the programming may be important criteria for assessing some television programs, but not public access. Only the user must be satisfied that the effort has merit. [1988, p.95]

If we do not use the numbers and if we are not to critique access programming just how should we assess access efforts? The divergence of opinion shown here highlights the importance of this question. Furthermore, much money is being spent on public access personnel, facilities, equipment, and training of public access producers. Some effort needs to be made to track what effect those efforts are having so that a determination as to whether that money should continue to be spent can be made.

Eastman, et al.[1985] write: "Such (access) programming does attract a small, interested audience and is recognized as a worthwhile public service." Their text on programming strategies and practices does not provide a source for the statement. It is written in typical textbook style as being supplied by the author's experience in the field of study.

Some studies have focused on the percentage of the TV audience which is attracted by access programming. "Studies done in Iowa City, Iowa and Kettering, Ohio indicate that at least 5 to 8% of the cable audience is attracted by just such programming" [Wallace,1983]. These studies asked people why they subscribed to cable. Jamison's study took this idea one step further and looked at the monetary value the access audience placed on access programming.

When the responses to the survey were tallied and correlated, the results showed that community access does play a small but significant role in the decisions of the residents of Kalamazoo to subscribe to cable television.[1985, p.140]

76% of cable subscribers had watched access and of those:

Thirteen percent responded that they would want to pay less for basic cable service if community access were discontinued. This figure is much higher than presurvey predictions and indicated that community access has a monetary value to Fetzer Cable Vision, as well as to viewers.[1985, p.153]

Moss and Warren call into question cable's ability to serve the community if only part of the community subscribes to cable.

The proportion of a city's population that receives cable signals is a basic indicator of a system's potential public role. Unless a substantial number of households subscribe, cable can make few claims to providing benefits to the community as a whole. [1984, p.237]

Sparkes comments that audience size is putting the cart before the horse:

Prior to all such concerns however, is the matter of the actual production or supply of programming. Audience attraction to access channels will be directly related to the breadth and depth of programming available. Community interest can only begin to be attracted when those with relevant messages are using the medium to reach their constituent publics. [1979, p.2]

Speaking of ratings in general, Television Audience Assessment Inc. writes:

The television industry has an adage: 'If they watch it they like it', reflecting the long-held assumption that the bigger the audience the more appealing the show. In fact Television Audience Assessment ...shows: the size of the audience is not a sufficient gauge of a programs appeal. Programs with small audiences can be highly satisfying to those who watch them, and programs with large audiences may rate low on an appeal scale. [1983, p.94]

In that volume Belville has a chapter on qualitative versus quantitative ratings and observes:

some in public TV likewise maintain that commercial rating measurement is an inadequate evaluation of whether public television is reaching its more exacting programming objectives. [1988]

Likewise public access or those who need to make decisions about public access may feel that ratings are an inadequate measure of the success of their efforts.

Access producers have reported that they are happy enough with the size of the audience. This was reported by Hardenbergh who conducted over 100 interviews with access producers:

Another interesting response came from many of the producers associated with the Guilford channel. As a group they had decided, after much discussion, to not worry about whether the program, or channel, had an audience. If two or two thousand watched a program the difference would not determine whether or not the program was produced. [1985, p.91]

When Sparkes [1979] used a mailed survey to measure producers' attitudes toward the community programming channel, one of the questions concerned whether audience size was unimportant. The scale he used gives a 5 for strongly agree. He reported a mean score of 4.23 on the audience size item. Fuller reveals a similar finding:

The truth is: very few producers ever considered the audience for their programs. The majority (60%) admitted never having thought about a particular target audience, but "hoped" a general response would relate to the shows. [1984, p.155]

White [1988] reports that 60% of producers say they receive some feedback from their audiences but he doesn't ask if audiences size matters to the producers.

Bretz, in an article which discusses access audience research done by others, offers a unique perspective on how to think of the results:

If you compare viewership of public access to that of other media, public access looks bad. If however, you measure the audience in numbers of people, you encourage comparison with other audiences gathering people together, such as meeting halls...the audience gathered in a small percentage of a community's cable TV homes might overflow the town's largest auditorium. [1975, p. 23]

Atkins and LaRose based their findings on a quarterly national telephone survey of 1,000 homes. They found:

Community channels do however perform consistently better than satellite-delivered channels such as B.E.T., C-Span, F.N.N., P.T.L., and S.P.N. They can even match the performance of Arts and Entertainment, C.B.N. and Lifetime at certain times.[1988, p.8]

These times are recognized to be periods of heightened political activity surrounding a local issue. Their conclusion was:

Judging purely on the basis of audience viewership and satisfaction, it would seem that community channels have earned a place on the cable roster.[1988, p.17]

Perhaps in trying to answer the question of whether audience size matters the answer will depend on who is being asked. The answer may be different for cable operators, access producers, the general public, access coordinators (staff), and municipal officials. The answer will be grounded in the expectations that the respondent has of community access television as a concept.

If audience size is an important criterion in determining the success of community access television, it may lead to a conflict with some of the fundamental underpinnings of the current access movement. As co-authors Eastman, Head and Klein point out:

Although the philosophy of access television includes the notion that individuals should, on their own terms, be able to address the television audience, sequences of unrelated, stand-alone presentations can not build audience loyalty and often alienate drop-in viewers. Access programming builds support with coherent, thematic, predictably scheduled programs and video services. The approach may smack of commercialism to access purists, but the experience of successful [their italics] access operations indicates that what works in commercial and public television broadcasting and cable networking also works in access.[1985, p.288]

Note that they emphasize the word "successful" but do not clearly state what they mean by it. The usage here seems to imply that building up an audience is an important measure of success. Yet if the above advice is followed it could well lead to radical policy changes for most access operations and may put access on the path to being more and more like commercial and public television.

If it is determined that audience size is not important, access may run the risk of being labeled 'Vanity Video' which Clifford [1982] wrote about. Also, the 1984 Cable Communications Act allows cable operators to separately post, on subscriber's bills, the amount going to

the franchise fees. Subscribers may start to voice opposition to their money going to provide access programming that they do not watch. Of course it could be countered that there are many taxpayers who fund the local library who don't utilize that resource. Janes has concerns along these lines. He writes in his summary of a case history of New Rochelle, N.Y.:

It remains unclear whether the public access channel is attracting any audience and truly living up to expectations. This is significant in that thousands of dollars, hundreds of working hours, and most importantly, a resource of community development and education may be going to waste. [1987, p. 23]

One point to be made about this quote is that the expectations of public access are not made explicit in Janes' article.

Again, if we do not use the numbers and if we are not to critique access programming, how should we evaluate access efforts? How communities are evaluating access efforts is the main point of this research.

Access Programming Diversity

Programming aspects of public access have been studied. When the F.C.C. mandated access in 1972 (since rescinded), programming of a local and diverse nature from a variety of sources was envisioned. Programming would be

done by plain folks and programming decisions would also be in their hands. There have been several ways that researchers have used to try to get at what access is doing in the way of programming. Rood [1977], Fuller [1984] and Wurtzel [1974] have looked at content and tried to categorize it. Most have come to the conclusion that there is a great variety of programming content. There are no set criteria for determining how this conclusion is reached. Kundanis states in her abstract "If public access is to contribute to diversity, local communities, not cable operators, must control access." [1987]

Berkin [1982] defines diversity for television programming by stating four factors which determine diversity: 1) something truly different from the norm 2) giving air time to nonmajority tastes 3) social and ethnic minorities content orientation 4) a range of choice for the viewer is implied. Even with this definition there is still quite a bit of room for subjective interpretation as to whether a channel's programming is diverse. How is one to judge what is "truly different"? Also the term "range of choice" is vague and does not provide objective criteria that can clearly be delineated.

A look at Boston Neighborhood Network's 87-88 annual report would probably convince most people that there is a great deal of diversity of programming. White's [1988]

Appendix I is another example of anecdotal evidence of diversity. These two documents list the names of programs and give a brief description of the program content. The programs seem quite "different" but that determination is subjective. Many case histories in Community Television Review and other sources of case histories [see Bender, 1979] in the literature include a list of programs offered by community access efforts that most people would call diverse. But if diversity is an important criterion in evaluating the success of access efforts, a standard methodology for affording that label needs to be developed. This literature review did not reveal any standard method for determining the degree of diversity. If such a methodology could be developed and used it would allow for comparisons to be made between communities and linearly within the same community over a period of time.

Access Producers

Producers of community access television have been studied by Enos [1979], Fuller [1984] and White [1988]. Enos' and Fuller's producers, in terms of experience in television production, were found to be very different. 68% of the producers studied by Enos in New York City had prior television production experience, while 69% of Fuller's producers in Longmeadow, MA had none. Both Fuller

and White noted that producers were highly educated. 97% of the producers in Fuller's study had attained college or graduate school while White reports 32% of the producers studied in Austin, TX had some college education, 38% are college graduates and 21% hold advanced degrees. These high education levels distinguish producers from the community's adult population at large and may call into question how diverse the sources of access programming really are. If only the highly educated produce programming that means that a small portion of the population is involved. This may not represent the needs of the less educated who are generally also poorer.

Other research reports producers as a percentage of the surveyed population of the community. Atkins and LaRose [1988] using a quarterly national survey reported fewer than 5% of the respondents reported having worked in community access television. Other research reports raw numbers of active access producers in an access effort. For comparative purposes the percentage way of reporting within a defined population is a much easier tool. It also needs to be noted that some access efforts allow producers who reside in other communities to be producers. Fully one third of Fuller's [1984] reported 300 producers came from outside the community served by the cable system that she studied. This finding raises the question of the possibility of communities competing for producers.

Producers from small towns may be drawn to a more advanced or more elaborately equipped access effort more likely to be found in a city.

White [1988] reports that 33% of producers are connected with community groups that are producing programming. Fuller [1984] found 29% of her producers felt obligated to get involved either by connection with an organization or employment. Sparkes [1979] found 74% of users of access were affiliated with an organization with respect to the community video production work they were involved in. Schmidt warns of a possible take over of programming by organized interest groups:

Lack of financing for access is a significant problem that has long-term impact on the access programming offered: ambitious and imaginative access programming will become the preserve of organized interest groups who can afford to produce shows to further their aims and unaffiliated persons and groups without resources will be left out. [1976, p. 210]

Koning writes on this issue in an article called "Balancing the Scales." He states that "Non-profit organizations get preferred treatment as compared with independent producers." [1988, p. 6] White offers further support of a trend when he notes that the amount of money that producers spent of their own funds versus grants and monies provided by their employers. He mailed a survey to all 231 access television producers who were registered with Austin Community Television in Texas. He reports that:

Sampled producers received and spent a total of \$19,390 in cash donations to support their access productions during the sample year, spent another \$49,035 of their own funds and contributed an additional \$38,295 that was provided by their employers to support their use of access equipment and facilities in work-related productions. [1988, p. 97]

Adding the the cash donations received and monies provided by employers the totals are \$57,685 versus the \$49,035 spent of the producers' own money. This raises questions as to how the individual producer will fare in the future. What policy direction should access take in this regard?

Complicating matters even further from the "pure" individual public producer concept, sponsorship and potential profits of access programming have been written about in the literature. "Some centers allow PBS-style sponsorship of programs, allowing the producers to recoup some of their costs" [Johnson and Shaffer, 1983, p.41]. There are some projects that are easier to find sponsors for than others. Obviously a program that takes a critical view of capitalism may find it difficult to find a business willing to sponsor it. The free-flow of programming may be unequally impeded by such arrangements. White reports on a 1984 Austin, Texas Cable Commission meeting:

They also began what would become an ongoing discussion about the sale of access productions for profit. Initially, commissioners and representatives of ACTV were in favor of some form of commercial sale as long as the programming had first-run on the access channels and only if the city retained some percentage of the profits (20-30%). [1988, p. 65]

Austin also started a "blue-ribbon panel" that gave away approximately \$10,000 at the Austin Access Video Awards and by 1985 they were planning to hire a grants writer to help access producers raise monies.

Money can buy production values and production time. If the producers need to find money to get their message out, a whole new structure is put in place in contrast to the soap box idea of free of charge citizen controlled programming. The citizen producer may be greatly influenced by the funding agencies and their willingness to fund particular kinds of shows. Is it important to keep money out of the access equation? Is it possible to keep it out? A form of censorship is the money available because it determines the media image. How does the current policy, structure and governance of access centers deal with this issue?

Boston's BCAPF 87-88 Annual Report states that

BCAPF is funded by Cablevision of Boston and receives additional funding from corporate contributions and program underwriting.
[1987-1988, p. 1]

When one looks at the programming section of this report, it is very unclear as to how program underwriting works. Do the ideas for programs come from the underwriters, from

citizen producers or from the management of BCAPF? There is one series of programs where BCAPF worked together with the Public Affairs Department of The Boston Globe covering projects sponsored annually by The Globe. This begs the question of being able to buy a spot on access television. This does not sound like citizen controlled programming.

Beyond sponsorship of programming the issue of how to deal with independent producers who bring money with them for productions has been addressed. Norman reports that Sommerville, MA. has changed policies to:

handle the increased resources some advanced producers bring with them, and the increased demands they make on us... When a producer raises more than \$2,000 for a project, s/he starts paying fees for equipment use. [1990, p.15]

At some point there develops a distinction between a community producer and an independent producer using access facilities. An independent producer in the video production world is someone who is striving to make a living from producing video. Johnson and Shaffer encourage the independent producer to look into using access facilities. Referring to possible misunderstandings on the how and why of access center rules they write:

This is a great loss to both the access center, which does need and want good programming, and the producer, who could find the access center just the resource s/he needs. [1983, p. 37]

Access centers may see in independent producers a source of programming that is striving to be professional and who do not need training in the area of video production. Does production by this category of semi-pro to professional independent producer fit in with the philosophy and purpose of an access center? If access moves in that direction how will it be distinguished from a production house?

Quality of Access Programming

The question of the quality of access programming has been raised in the literature. It is the technical quality that is most often addressed as opposed to the quality of content. Public access television, it has been noted, has poor technical quality.

The poor quality of such "volunteer" productions draws small audiences, which cable companies can use against access centers' survival. [Norman, 1990, p. 14]

A typical scenario of the technical problems is found in Ryan's dissertation:

With the hypothetical production under way, all of the information to be presented is in the studio or at the location. The video recording process begins with a member of the crew assigned to video tape recording (usually the lack of editing facilities made it necessary for the show to be produced in real time). At this point, the overall quality of public access programming becomes a consideration since the quality of the equipment is very poor. Often, the lack of availability of multi-camera and switching equipment requires the public access program to be a single camera with all camera movement being very obvious on air. [1986, p. 46]

White reports on a controversy regarding quality in
Austin, Texas:

The growing conflict between the various proponents of access in Austin was exacerbated when Don Smith the City Cable Officer, ...suggested that some public access programming was of poor quality and "not representative of the mainstream" in the statewide magazine Third Coast. Smith proposed that the responsibility for training, ascertainment and production be taken away from ACTV or "decentralized" and given to several city departments. He further argued that the city, ACTV or some representative thereof be given the power to "hire professional producers" to create high-quality programs for mass audiences. [1988, p.60]

Halleck describes "Paper Tiger", a series on access in
New York City:

If there is a specific look to the series , it is "handmade": a comfortable , nontechnocratic look that says "friendly" and low budget. [1984, p. 315]

She goes on to describe hand lettered graphics and simple sets. Buske and Oringel write:

We should always aim as high as possible for technical quality, but we must also recognize that our people are not professionals and that our equipment is at best industrial grade and at worst consumer grade. It is therefore not always possible to have the best picture and sound signal. Also, in access the message should be considered at least as important as the medium, except in a situation where the message is totally distorted by being a very flawed medium. [1987, p. 30]

Rood [1977] asked the viewing audience a four step question on production standards with regard to locally produced programs. He reports that 26% rated production values as good, 54% said they were fair and 19% rated them poor. Banks and Porter [1987] in describing what had been written about the quality of access programming described the assessment as "mixed reviews." In their study respondents were polled for words they associated with public access. When coded 23.6% mentioned people, public or individuals, 19.8% were coded as local community, 14.2% as special interest, 11.3% government, politics and 5% associated low cost with public access.

Atkin and LaRose [1988] in concluding their research recommend a smaller number of higher quality programming for access but they are not clear in their determination of what they mean by higher quality. Greene [1982] comments that the technical quality of access in New York City "leaves much to be desired."

Hardenbergh used a predominately technical set of criteria to determine the percentages of programs that demonstrated characteristics that she labeled as non-traditional. This scale was used to compare one community's programming to another. She does not make general statements about quality from this study. She does report this:

However, this study finds that producers, not the audience, are the ones more interested in making sure the content is similar to other traditional television. [1985, p. 128]

It is important to remember that her reference to content is based on largely technical criteria such as the duration of a shot before switching. Spiller's findings in his study of Canadian community television supports Hardenbergh. Spiller [1980] reports that the audience is not concerned about the production values if they want to watch the program because they are interested in the subject matter or because they know the people on camera; technical slickness is not needed. The audience requires the basics of being able to hear what is spoken and being able to make out the picture, but the audience does not, for the most part, need a polished production. The production values are not the factor which attracts the viewer.

Doty reports that "95% of the public access programming is talking heads and real events" [1975, p. 37]. Talking heads refers to talk shows and interviews where the visual consists only of the person who is talking.

High technical quality video production requires skill, tools, and time. Access rules from three towns were reviewed as part of this literature search: Shrewsbury, MA,

South Portland, ME, and Sommerville, MA. Two of the sets of rules set limits on the amount of time a producer can have equipment for the production of a program before a fee for the equipment is assessed. This rule may be at odds with a producer's ability to increase production quality.

Beyond the criteria of diversity in access programming, research about the quality of programming content has not been found in the literature. There have been controversies which have arisen in this regard but little could be found in the literature. Gillespie in 1975 spoke of the concern about obscene programming which he reported was largely "unfounded." Alderson writes of the Ugly George Hour of Truth, Sex and Violence which consists in part of interviews with women whom George has lured off the street and talked into undressing on camera and Maria at Midnight, hosted by stripper Maria Darvi, who hopes that her access exposure will get her seen by talent scouts and lead to a high paying movie role. The subtitle of this article asks "On public access, people do and say what ever they like. Why are efforts underway to kill it off [1988, p. 130]?" Alderson reports that controversy over these shows has led to a fragile compromise wherein access producers voluntarily stay within the limits of an "R" rating.

Schwartz [1988] reports on the city of Austin's controversial program called Race and Reason. The program was produced by a former Ku Klux Klan official in Southern California and an Austin man submitted the program for cablecasting. Opposition was raised to the airing of this program. The program now airs at 1am instead of 10:30pm. Austin access policy states it must schedule such a program once a Austin resident asks for it to be cablecast. Mark Yudof, Dean of the University of Texas Law School has brought up the question of whether it is unconstitutional for a city to require access programming, stating that it infringes on the cable operators' rights as a publisher. The Cable Communications Act of 1984 clearly states that it is within a city's prerogative to require access channels but the question may move forward in the courts. The criteria for rejection of programming are obscenity and libelous programming. The article states that debate on this issue continues on the public access channel.

Quantity

The quantity of public access programming has also been studied and may be a useful criteria to help define the success of access centers. In a report developed by the NFLCP, 8 cities were compared as to the structure and function of the local cable advisory board. All 8 cities

reviewed were found to have as a function of the cable advisory board:

Duties and functions that will maximize use of public access channels among the broadest range of individuals, institutions and organizations.
[1983, Table D]

Fuller [1984] reports that over 500 programs were produced in the first year of operation in the Longmeadow, MA system that she studied. She classified this as a factor of success. Ledingham [1983] used the criteria of 20 hours of programming per week as his dependent variable when he studied the characteristics of cable access centers in the top 100 markets. He justifies or explains his methodology by writing that since centers are there to be used, a high number of hours is an indicator of success. He hypothesized that high hour centers would have certain qualities such as state of the art equipment and a paid director and that the low hours centers would not possess those features. White [1988] reports 2,000 original hours cablecast by ACTV during the 1986-1987 period. Boston's BCAPF reports 418 hours of channel time of original programs produced by access plus news shows totaling 114.5 hours in the 1987-1988 annual report. A third category of programming hours which is done by BCAPF on an underwriting basis is not totaled.

Moss and Warren [1984] include in their listing of local origination programming community bulletin board services that utilize text automation like a character generator where community announcements can be electronically posted. It is not clear if this is separated from other hours of programming that is reported.

Is the quantity of programming produced an important aspect of measuring the success of an access operation? If so then I would suggest that quantity be related to the size of the community and to the equipment available to produce the programming. A community with 3000 residents producing 10 hours of weekly programs is quite different from 3 million residents of a city producing those 10 hours. But in either case if there is no access equipment to produce it those 10 hours would represent an extraordinary effort. Perhaps reporting quantity in an hours per thousand residents would be a way to compare the quantities of an access centers' effort. The equipment could be factored in by totalling the dollar value of access equipment available.

Local Content

Local content is often expressed as an important difference between what is provided by community access

producers and broadcast stations. The difference between local origination and public access is that local origination is controlled by the cable company, is produced by paid staff and commercials are sometimes sold to support it. Public access television is publicly controlled and its programming is not paid for by the access center though some access efforts allow sponsorship of programs.

Speaking of the emphasis on local content, Banks and Porter write:

Clearly the most frequently cited purpose of public access TV is to focus upon the local community. (Smith 74, Augenthie et al, Clemens 1980-81, Jofee 1981, Moss and Warren 1984, NFLCP 1985, Milwaukee Access Telecommunications Authority 1986) [1987, p. 1]

Other researchers concur, Atkin and LaRose, speaking of the content of access in comparison to broadcast television, state:

Such matters (local news, a wide range of ethnic, community and political affairs) no doubt, often fall through the cracks of commercial broadcasters--dependent as they are upon the profit motive. [1988, p.17]

Eastman, Head and Klein go further in characterizing access as local: "Access programming's singular characteristic is localism, often to the level of 'neighborhoodism'." [1985, p. 287] Forbes and Laying [1977] also wrote of the community emphasis of public access television.

When Huie found two schools that reported teaching the unique characteristics of access to their students the uniqueness was described in these terms:

cable subscribers will be able to see programs about people, places, and events in their own community...putting students in touch with the community and with the people who are fighting the battles.[1987, p. 50]

Research was not found that specifically focused on quantifying the local content of public access television or documenting how local needs were being served by the local content. There are a number of sources that noted entertainment content as a large percentage of programming. For example Kundanis [1987] studied two aspects that when juxtaposed make an interesting observation about access programming. One question that she asked of access producers in her survey which was mailed to the membership list of the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers was, what kind of programming they thought would be in the public interest. They responded that community, public affairs and health programs were most likely to serve the public interest. Then she compared this to the actual frequency of the appearance of programming types that the respondents reported on their access channel and found that community, public affairs and entertainment were the highest in actual frequency. The categories of the types of programming which she used were

based on the work that Wurtzel [1975] had done in his research which reported on programming on public access in New York City. Kundanis [1987] included very brief examples of what was meant by each category title in the survey she sent out. Her explanation of the three categories mentioned here were:

Entertainment (including various types of music and dance)...Public affairs programming (for example programming about municipal services or local meetings...Community (community events and activities), Health (such as information about drug abuse, free health clinics) [1987, p.238]

Should entertainment programming on access be part of a tally of local content? Is quantifying local content a way of measuring the success of an access effort?

Access becomes a process within the community according to some writers. Eastman, Head and Klein write:

At its best, access television provides the clearest example of localism in the electronic media and it benefits subscribers, user groups, and the cable operator. Community access operators typically see themselves as facilitators of community interaction, not as imitators of low budget independent television. The access operator prefers to provide live coverage of a public discussion on a local zoning issue, for example, rather than produce a documentary on zoning problems. Access channels tend to be communications resources for the community, not production centers. Thus, creating viable access programming involves a) helping community groups form consortia and b) helping them integrate television communication into their own quite specific activities and interests.[1985, p.288]

Supporting this 'process' view of access programming Bender writes from the perspective of her case study approach that:

It is often the case that the process of public access/community video can be a unifying force in a community while at the same time providing an outlet for divergent and often conflicting points of view and for life styles.[1979, p. 10]

Fuller [1984] documents audience response to being asked if public access had increased a sense of community in the town. She reported that 40% said it had increased a sense of community in the town. She also reported that 34% of respondents said it had increased their knowledge of town government. Church comments on the activization role that access can play:

...the potential of community access to serve as a means to help citizens feel empowered to transact public affairs. [1987, p. 11]

In order to help access serve the needs of the local community "needs analysis" for access efforts have been done. Janes [1987] reports on a regional needs analysis done of access programming and Wolfsohn and Kay [1980] tell how to conduct a needs analysis for cable television in "Ascertainment of Community Needs: Proposing a Systems Approach." Neustadt and Miller call for "an ongoing needs assessment process" [1982, p.89] as part of the policy they recommend for an access effort. Have access efforts used a needs analysis approach for measuring their success?

Training of Access Producers

Authors have written about the demystification of television through increased knowledge of the television production process and the activization of passive viewers into active community producers [Helleck, 1984 Church, 1987 Huie, 1987 Bednarczyk and Rice, 1977]. Training access producers is a central function of access efforts:

In addition to providing a forum to speak, the most prevalent service provided by public access channels was training [Kundanis, p.139].

Sklover [1973] noted early on in the access experiment that education in the use of television would be important to the long term existence of public access.

White reported training 500 producers in Austin, TX in 1987. Boston's access effort in their annual report for 87-88 reported 138 new producers trained. Fuller [1984] stated that in the first year of operation the Longmeadow, MA access effort had 300 volunteers on their list.

No studies were found that systematically studied the training of access producers in a quantifiable or comparative way, though some of the case studies do give brief descriptions of the training. Not studying training is surprising since training takes a lot of resources and staff time and since producer development is at the core of access program production. There should be some effort in comparative practices in an attempt to find out if there

are better ways than others to train community producers. Comparisons could be made with regard to content, readings, scheduling, size of class, completion rate and the retention rate and productivity of trained producers.

Summary

The literature review has revealed that a number of authors were motivated to write of the potential of public access cable television. The usage they articulated was positive and creative. Few of the authors spoke of how cable access might have problems.

Audience studies were revealed as an issue with regard to public access cable television. More often audience studies were found to be a commonly held measure of public access performance. An opposing point of view was also present in the literature. This viewpoint points out that quantitative audience research has no place in evaluating public access cable television. Some studies used the audience study to show that public access cable television has economic value to the cable companies.

Diversity of programming has been written about but no standard method for determining the degree of diversity was revealed.

Producers of public access have been studied in previous research. This has shown high education levels of access producers but a varied level of prior television production experience. There were concerns raised by some authors that many access producers are coming to produce programming as a member of a preexisting community organization which endangered the individual free speech concept of access. Some information about the money access producers provide to accomplish their programming efforts was reported on. The training of access producers was stated by several authors as a central function of public access efforts and it was therefore surprising that no studies were found that focus on the training.

The quality of access productions has been researched previously. It seems that this research mixes and confuses technical quality and content quality thus making the picture very murky. There seems to be agreement that technical slickness is not needed by the audience as long as they are interested in the subject matter. This section of the chapter also notes some of the controversy surrounding certain programs that deal with race and nudity.

Most of the research that dealt with the quantity of public access cable television was reported in raw numbers and were reported differently by different researchers.

This makes comparisons quite difficult. A comparative method was suggested as a more meaningful way to report this data.

Local content was expounded in the literature to be an important aspect of public access cable television but no research was found which attempted to measure the amount of local content.

The research was frequently of a case study nature as opposed to quantifiable statistical approaches. This may relate to the difficulty of doing research in an area where there is such diversity between access efforts. The research in the area of public access cable television is in general sparse and somewhat fragmented. That is to say there is no clear pattern of one study building on another nor were there studies that attempt to comprehensively deal with all access efforts and their practices on a national level. In fact it seems that there is no national listing of the access efforts that exist at the present time. Though one was found for the state of Massachusetts. More often the research focused on a small geographic area, many times on just one community.

The conclusion portion of this chapter will speak to the reaction the researcher had to the literature review with specific regard to how it influenced the formulation of the research undertaken in this study.

Conclusion

At this point in time public access cable television is not mandated by the FCC. The local franchise agreement usually defines the terms of support that the cable operator provides for access. Access is seen by many cable operators as a financial burden [Ryan, 1986, p.96]. The Cable Communications Act of 1984 allows cable operators to list the franchise fee as a separate item on the subscriber's bill. If cable operators do show this fee on the bill it may cause subscribers to begin to raise questions as to what they are getting for their money. The local franchise authority chooses to support local access efforts through the franchise fee they collect from cable companies. Those monies can not be used for other government expenses. Controversial content or tough fiscal times may cause public officials to look closely at the access funding allocation. Supporting this viewpoint Atkin and LaRose write:

In light of recent concerns regarding access programming, such policies (referring to franchise fees) are likely to face increased challenges on political as well as economic fronts. [p. 16]

The possibility of financial support for access being reduced or eliminated seems more than remote. It may be that a group of well organized community access supporters

may be able to fend off these possible attacks. It is my contention that without some sort of data or evaluation of the access effort that defense of access will be weak.

A number of access concerns are seeking funding independent of the franchise fee. Program sponsorship and underwriting are being tried. But if franchise fees stop flowing or are reduced and access finds it must support itself through non-public funds, its programming may be dictated by the marketplace and ratings and sponsors rather than be driven by the idealism of the freedom of speech notion that the FCC envisioned. There is research done by Kundanis which indicates that when producers of access and people connected with cable television were asked if they thought that the marketplace is the best judge of public interest, the results were that 48.3% disagreed with that position while 40.6% agreed that the marketplace was the best judge. Can access remain unaffected by the marketplace? The difficulty of defining what 'in the public interest' means for public access is what her dissertation is all about. The marketplace is the driving force behind commercial television and there is a lot of disenchantment voiced in this regard.

How can access insure its continuance? If it does not secure its future based on public funds, it may lose a lot of control over its content. If it seeks to avoid programs

that would lead to controversy, it would be betraying the uncensored programming principle that it was founded on. How can any access effort control programming without affecting the bedrock of free speech that access is built on? Has access found itself in a lose, lose position?

Ryan [1986] predicts that access will become an adjunct to local origination which would mean the cable companies would control programming. Stoney sees access going in the opposite direction, that is to say he thinks that commercial and public television will be turning over more time for public access:

Eventually I believe this access principle will be applied to all electronic media...to PBS, to the networks, and to radio. You may call me a 'visionary' and I will accept the accusation. Such an idea is no more incredible than our rule of 'one person, one vote' must have seemed back in the 18th century. [1986, p. 8]

The first step in figuring out where access goes from here must start with a clear vision of access' purpose. The FCC may have had a clear purpose in mind but it is now the local franchise authority with its cable advisory board and local program producers who are making access what it is.

My research endeavored to find out if access has a clear purpose. How does public access define success? What are the goals of public access?

Are those goals measurable so that results may be communicated to those who may be called upon to support access via public monies such as local subscribers, cable operators and local authorities? At the moment it is unclear how to define success for access. Ledingham supports this position: "consensus concerning the goals of cable access centers is elusive" [1983, p. 5]. He calls for more research:

Clearly there is a need for further research into the perceptions of the role of access centers among center personnel, local government, and access audiences. [1983, p. 21]

Kundanis makes a similar observation: "Public access seems to be doing the job that it was intended to do [1987, p. 139]. She goes on to say that citizens are using the channel and that training is happening but she in no way qualifies or quantifies the observation. Greene [1982] wrote an article in the New York Times entitled, "Is Public Access TV Doing its Job?" The article never comes to any conclusion. Unless a job description is written for public access, the answer will elude us.

Since there is no clear definition of what a successful access center is, gaining insight through perception of various groups is valuable. This is what this research was intended to do.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Prior research and writing on public access cable television have pointed to many factors which have been used to study public access. These factors include access audience research, local content, programming diversity, access producers, quality of access programming, and quantity of access programming. To determine what is the practice actually being used by communities to evaluate their public access efforts, I studied the past and current activity related to evaluation for funding of five public access efforts in three states: Monson, MA, Newton, MA, Winchester, MA Westerly, RI, and Greater Hartford, CT.

The main data source for the research was in-depth interviews with advisory board members as well as interviews conducted with the person in charge of public access on a day to day basis. Communities which had recently undergone franchising were used. Also only communities which reported having public access cable television since 1988 were eligible.

This chapter explains the process and rationale for choosing the communities and interviewees that were used. It also covers the development of the interview tool as well as results of the pre-test conducted using the set of questions. The data collection process is explained and finally the justification for using the chosen method is provided at the end of the chapter.

Methodology

The study consists of in-depth interviews done with at least two persons involved with public access from each franchise. One of the interviews in each community was to be done with people who were identified and identified themselves as the person "in charge" of public access on a day to day basis in that community. The cable company was determined using lists provided by the three state's offices which dealt with cable television. A call placed to the cable company requested to be directed to the person "in charge" of public access at the time of refranchise. An interview was sought from that person and that person was requested to recommend who on the advisory commission would be the person most involved with public access. That person was sought out for the second interview in the community. A consent form with a cover letter was sent to

the interviewees along with a list of questions so that they might have an opportunity to prepare for the interview (see appendix).

The initial choice of the franchises to be studied was determined using two criteria. The first criterion was a community which has had public access since 1988. This was used to find communities that were somewhat mature in their public access efforts. It was not the intention to study access efforts in communities where the concept was in its infancy. The second criterion in choosing the franchise was locating cable systems where a refranchising process had occurred in the recent past, specifically in 1989 or 1990. This second criterion was used because during the refranchise process there are often negotiations which include discussion about the funding and structure that public access will have for the length of the contract renewal. It was felt that this window of activity would afford a rich environment for the purposes of this study. Once communities were determined to fit these two criteria they were to be chosen at random within their state. Prior to the study it was decided to do three communities in Massachusetts one in Connecticut and one in Rhode Island. This was done so as to limit the expense of the study, since I was located in Massachusetts; yet, it includes other states so as to expand the study beyond a strictly Massachusetts study.

The study consisted of three major steps: 1) locating public access efforts which meet articulated criteria and were willing to participate, 2) conducting the in-depth interviews to determine evaluation practices and, 3) analysis of the information received to develop a framework for the evaluation of access efforts.

The first step was to locate public access efforts which met two criteria: they had to have had access since 1988 and they must have renegotiated their franchise in 1989 or 1990. Using files from Department of Public Utility Control of Connecticut; Department of Public Utility, Rhode Island; Massachusetts Cable Commission Office and phone calls to systems where official state records indicated a refranchising in 1989 or 1990 to determine if the community had had public access since 1988 the first step was accomplished.

The second research step was to conduct in-depth interviews to determine current and historical possible directions for evaluation practices. Based on the literature review a survey was developed to uncover evaluation practices. The data was collected through audio recorded phone interviews. The phone was used because the time and expense required to travel to the sites was prohibitive. I had access to a watts line which meant

phone charges were kept to a minimum. The researcher has considerable experience with telephone research and was very comfortable using the telephone. Also the phone interviews allowed for greater flexibility in scheduling the one to two hour interviews. For instance, one interview was conducted beginning at eleven at night because of conflicting schedules.

Although in person interviews would have given the researcher some assurance that the interviewee was giving their full attention to the process it would have also meant that the non-verbal cues given by the researcher could have influenced the interviewee. Also the Cable Advisory Committee members were usually interviewed while they were at home. This is because their involvement with public access is not part of their job so they did not want to be interviewed at their place of work. Conducting in-person interviews in private homes would have been uncomfortable for the researcher to carry out.

Open ended questions were chosen because they allow for the gathering of information about motives, due to their flexibility for follow-up or probing of answers. A sample of the open-ended questions is attached to be found in the appendix. These questions sought to determine what were the current practices as well as to determine philosophical underpinnings with regard to public access.

It utilized people who were very involved with access efforts. This study was not based on a set of assumptions but rather took a basic research approach to determine from those who are heavily involved in public access what the current practices are for evaluating public access and determining the relationship of that evaluation to funding. A guideline written by Patton (1980) was used to develop the questionnaire for this research project.

Question

Background Questions

1 - 7

Background questions on the community

8

Technical questions on the system

9 - 26

Background on public access activity and resources also meant to elicit a sense of how much record keeping goes on with regard to public access activity.

Interview Questions

- | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2 | Historical perspective of their involvement in public access in the community. |
| 3 | There is some confusion as to exactly what defines public access so it is important to collect definitions to determine if people are talking about the same thing. |
| 4-8 | Goals of public access. |
| 9-13 | Funding and structure of public access. |
| 14-23 | Determining what occurred during the refranchise process |
| 23a-26 | Draw out information on the relationship between funding and evaluation. |

27

Relationship of
interviewee to evaluation
process.

28-30

To elicit future
directions evaluation
could take, probing was
used to determine the
specifics of how
evaluation would be
carried out if response
was general.

The narrative responses of respondents serve as the data for this research. Responses will be presented in a town by town organization. The discussion of results will compare and contrast the findings between towns and states.

As a pretest of the question, the Executive Director of Fitchburg Access Television was interviewed. The instrument proved it could be used by respondents. The questions were understood. The instrument also proved to be worthwhile as the responses illuminated current evaluation practices.

Justification for Methodological Strategy

Public access cable television is a fairly new and rare phenomenon. Yet it has been in existence long enough to warrant study of how the public access experiment is being evaluated by the communities in which it is funded and therefore exists. By using an historical/interview technique it will be possible to balance the depth with which one looks at any one system with the number of public access efforts I can study given limited resources. Patton [1980] suggests that a qualitative research process be used to document a process. The process that I will document is how the five community access efforts are evaluated at funding decision points. Since I am studying a process, qualitative research is called for.

Other reasons for using this approach can be found. The literature has documented that the goals of public access are often not well defined. Vague program goals is another reason Patton [1980] states for using a qualitative approach.

Another reason for choosing this qualitative approach lies in the fact that research on public access in the area of evaluation efforts is so sparse and fragmented that this research can be seen as basic research in this area. As such, formation of a hypothesis with narrowly defined treatments would simply not be possible to develop.

Analysis of what exists versus pursuing a preconceived notion is hoped to uncover patterns of evaluation processes used by public access practitioners. Qualitative research was used for this project in order to reduce the possibility of preconceived notions simply being reinforced.

Lastly, by utilizing the case study approach the unique characteristics of each public access will be presented in a context rather than lost in statistical analysis.

Summary

An in-depth interview approach was designed to collect data in five communities regarding how that community evaluated their public access efforts. The communities were choose with regard to having recently renegotiated their cable license and reporting that they had public access cable television since 1988.

The interview tool was developed based on the literature review and was successfully pre-tested.

The next chapter will explain what happened upon implementing the method herein outlined.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will explain how finding communities that fit the criteria and who agreed to participate was a major effort in this research. The methodology outlined in the previous chapter needed to be manipulated to encompass the variety of realities that were found in the three states studied. At least two in-depth interviews were done in each of the five communities. The five communities that were utilized were: Monson, MA, Newton, MA, Winchester, MA, Westerly, RI, and Greater Hartford, CT.

The chapter's bulk consists of the responses provided by the interviewees. These results are presented by community. The results within each community's case presentation is typically divided into seven sections: 1) definitions and structure of the public access effort, 2) the goals of the access effort, how the interviewees defined success for their effort and how they had evaluated their public access cable television effort, 3) changes that were requested when the license was renegotiated, 4)

standards they used to compare their public access effort to, 5) current issues, 6) subscribers funding access and 7) potential evaluation directions as they saw them.

Selecting Communities

Locating communities which fit the criteria and agreed to participate will be discussed on a state by state basis. The criteria used were: 1) communities that say they have had public access cable television since at least 1988, 2) communities who have recently gone through a refranchising process.

Finding communities which fit these criteria proved to be time consuming, but it did provide a rich environment for the research. Some adaptations to the criteria that were needed will be explained.

Selecting Communities in Massachusetts

In Massachusetts franchises are awarded town by town with the town/city council, mayor or town manager acting as the issuing authority. To find three public access efforts in Massachusetts that fit the criteria proved to be cumbersome. Ms. Kyle at the State Office provided me with

a list of franchises in the state with the license expiration date. The Massachusetts Cable Commission listing did not indicate which systems had public access or when public access in that community had begun. So it was necessary to call all the eleven cable systems in Massachusetts whose license was indicated to expire in 1989 or 1990 to determine if they had had public access since 1988. Another resource used to assist in this effort was a database published by Cambridge Access Television which lists every town in Massachusetts and the contact person for public access if their research had indicated that there was some public access activity occurring in that community.

Of the eleven communities contacted it was determined that three had public access since at least 1988. Those were Newton, Winchester and Monson. All three of these communities were studied in this research. Of the eight communities that reported not having public access before 1988, five now have started public access efforts as a result of the refranchising process. Even though these systems do not fit the criteria of this research the findings are interesting. The five communities that have public access as a feature of their new cable contact are Barnstable, East Longmeadow, Falmouth, Montague and Yarmouth. Chuck Sherwood, of Cape Code Community Television, reported that Barnstable and Yarmouth have

joined with Dennis, Chatham and Harwich to pool the money and resources available for public access into one access center that serves all the towns. When I asked C. Sherwood if the community had public access prior to 1988 he said that "it depends on your definition of public access." He reported that in Barnstable, after the Midwest II case, the cable company interpreted that legal decision as giving them the go ahead to stop public access and that's what they did. He said that the cable company might say that the couple of programs that survived would be construed as public access but that since they were not done by volunteers and were under the editorial control of the cable company that he would say those programs were the product of local origination and not public access. The community had equipment, training and channel space for public access from 1979-1981 and then it was withdrawn. So this is a situation where there was public access then there was none and now, as a result of the newest refranchise agreement public access has a regional access center. East Longmeadow, according to Bob Gaboury, Regional General Manager of Greater Media Cable which services that town, has some public access efforts beginning to be formulating in the local school system with equipment being located there. Falmouth and Montague reported being in the start up phase of public access.

Tim Lindrop, Executive Director of Montague's access effort, reported that Montague has not yet purchased any equipment for the production of public access programming and Jennifer Lehigh, Access Director in Falmouth said that Falmouth set up a studio in 1989.

Agawam and West Springfield are served by Continental Cable Company. Cecelia Lang, Community Programming Manager, is the person I was referred to as being in charge of public access for that system, but upon speaking to Ms. Lang, I understood that the communities of Agawam and West Springfield had no active public access efforts, and that local programming was done mostly by employees defining it as local origination and not public access.

Ludlow is also served by Greater Media and Bob Gaboury, Regional General Manager of that system, reported that there was money offered by the cable company for public access in Ludlow but that no community organization has come forward to use it.

This study will look at the three communities, Newton, Winchester and Monson, that were found had to have public access before 1988 and who were refranchised in 1989 or 1990. Of the three communities, two went through some extensive changes in the set up and structure of public access as a result of the refranchise process.

These changes were, for the most part, responses to experience with public access in the community. Therefore, the intention of studying "mature" public access communities paid off. Mature is defined as having had public access since at least 1988. These changes that are referred to include, in the case of Newton, MA, the change over from a cable company run access center to the formation of a separate non-profit organization whose charter it is to provide for public access in that community. Because of this change, the person now in charge of public access, George Preston, declined to participate since he had only been hired two weeks prior to my call. He deferred to Rika Welsh who had been serving Newton Cable Access Corporation as a consultant to get the new non-profit organization's board of directors oriented to the concepts and issues involved in public access. Also because of this change and because the present and future structure was just taking form, it was decided to attempt to interview the person who had run Newton's public access effort prior to the change over. Tony Doar, Area General Manager for Continental, felt that since that person had been reassigned within Continental's organization it would not be appropriate to have her participate in the research. Mr. Doar made the decision that the reassigned employee should concern herself with her current community and current duties and not be interrupted by reviewing the

past. He himself was willing to participate. He had personally been involved in the negotiation and it was deemed appropriate that he represent the historical perspective for the Newton system. The questions were changed to reflect this historical perspective.

Selecting a Community in Rhode Island

In Rhode Island, one of my criteria for the selection of franchise systems was impossible to meet, as I will explain, and the other criterion was a given that state. The idea of studying one community had to be modified, for the service areas of franchises in Rhode Island encompass several communities. It proved difficult for the interviewees to answer the survey questions from the perspective of a single town within the service area.

The criterion of having undergone a refranchising process was impossible to meet for, as I learned from John Knotte of the state's cable office, there is no refranchising of cable systems. The license, when granted by the Utilities Commission, does not have an expiration date. The other criterion of having public access since 1988 was given whereas the Rhode Island Department of Public Utilities has mandated public access in their regulations since the 1987 "Rules Governing Community Antenna Television Systems" were developed.

As a result, Mr. Knotte suggested that I study the Westerly, Rhode Island system. In his professional opinion, garnered by being a one man cable office for a number of years, Westerly would represent a typical Rhode Island franchise. That is how Westerly, Rhode Island was chosen. The interview itself needed to be modified to reflect the absence of the refranchise process. More focus was given to how changes are made. Special attention was paid to changes which affect public access.

Selecting a Community in Connecticut

One of the criterion was also a given in Connecticut. That is to say that the Department of Utility Control in the state of Connecticut, has required public access in communities served by cable since May, 1982 (phone conversation Dino Pasovo, March 1991).

Connecticut provided the researcher with a good dose of rejection. Representatives of three cable companies who were in charge of public access declined to participate in the research before a willing participant was located. This was in part due to the list received from Connecticut's Department of Public Utility Control. That list was titled "Termination Dates of Cable Franchises."

It had been updated on March 1, 1991. As a result the only termination dates that were listed as 1989 or 1990 were open files. This meant that they had not yet come to a final agreement on the terms of the refranchise agreement. It was not initially understood by the researcher that those cable companies whose file was marked closed, even though they had termination dates in the future i.e., 1995, were companies where agreements had been reached. Using a roll of dice on the companies listed with termination dates of 1989 or 1990 (which were open) representatives of three cable companies were pursued for this research and declined to participate. Those were the Public Access Coordinator, of Comcast Cablevision of Danbury, the Public Access Manager of Heritage Cablevision of Connecticut and Storer Cable Television of Connecticut, Inc. The representative of Storer who had previously agreed to the in-depth interview then checked with his general manager. He found that it was "company policy" not to comment on the refranchise process while they are involved in hearings with the Department of Public Utility Control. When he said they were "involved in hearings" the pattern of rejection started to have an explanation. Clearly a cable company that has not come to a final agreement is focusing on reaching that agreement and is not in a position where it would welcome a researcher's questions. At that point clarification was sought from the Public Utility Commission to find cable companies who were not in active

negotiations, whose file had been closed during the 1989-1990 window.

Each of these rejections represents up to four weeks of time invested into pursuing participation. The process would involve the phone contact with the person in charge of access. This can take up to a week with playing phone tag to try to catch the person. Then in some cases the potential interviewee wanted to see the questions before they would make the decision to participate or not. Sending the questionnaire through the mail took about one week. Then I would call again to get their final answer and to arrange for a specific appointment to conduct the interview via the telephone. Between another game of phone tag and busy schedules that would not allow for scheduling an interview, in the very near future, another two weeks could go by. As a result of these three rejections subsequent requests for participation were done in a non-linear manner to try to make up for ill invested time. That is to say rather than the use of a roll of a die to decide which franchise to pursue and pursuing that franchise until they had refused or agreed I called all of the files that had been closed in the 1989-1990 window and used the first one I could reach and get cooperation from.

Upon obtaining the new information on closed files all the potential cable companies who fit the criteria were contacted and pursued. In the interest of time the cover letter and receipt of questions prior to the interview were dispensed. The written consent form was mailed after the interview. Verbal consent was granted before the interview.

Because of time constraints, the first cable company to agree to participate and to schedule an interview was the Connecticut cable franchise system studied. That system was owned by Cox Cable of Greater Hartford. That interview was done from the perspective of the entire service area. The service area of Cox Cable of Greater Hartford comprises six towns. The researcher interviewed two members of the Advisory Council because information was received from the Chairperson of the Cable Advisory Council that the six towns varied greatly in their involvement and activity level with regard to public access. He advised studying the two extremes represented within the six town service area. Following this advice a member from the advisory council who lived in Manchester and one who lived in Newington were interviewed.

Table 1: Community Representatives

Table shows which systems were researched and who represented that system in this research

	<u>Cable Company</u>	<u>In Charge of</u> <u>Public Access</u>	<u>Cable Advisory</u> <u>Committee/Council</u>
<u>MA</u>			
Monson	Times Mirror	Merrill Olchik of Municipal Public Access	Grace Makepeace
Newton	Continental Cable	Tony Doar of Continental Rika Walsh Consultant for Newton Cable Access Corp.	Martin Alpert
Winchester	Continental Cable	Don Cronin Continental Mike Leone Continental	Allan Eyden
<u>RI</u>			
Westerly	Westerly Cable	Frank McMahon Westerly Cable	Tom Chinigo
<u>CT</u>			
Greater			
Hartford System	Cox Cable	Don McNamara of Cox Cable	Andy Vincens Ed Pizzella

Case #1 - Winchester, Massachusetts

Preface: Winchester, Massachusetts

Winchester is located in eastern Massachusetts, about seven miles northwest of Boston. The community was described by Don Cronin, a respondent, as "closer to urban" than suburban, white collar, and affluent. The cable system passes close to eight thousand homes and at the time of the research had 5,095 subscribers according to Mike Lionne. The cable system is reported to have a sixty channel capacity.

In the community of Winchester, three interviews were done. I called the cable company and asked to speak to whoever was in charge of public access in that community. I was directed to Don Cronin, the Program Director, the person who runs the access effort in Winchester on a day to day basis. He works for Continental Cablevision. Cronin's supervisor is Mike Lionne, who was also interviewed because Cronin referred me to him to answer some of the questions that refer to refranchising and budget matters. Cronin did not have much to do with either refranchising or budgets even though he was in his current position throughout their franchise process. It is simply a matter of job duties within Continental Cablevision. The third person

interviewed connected with Winchester's public access was Allan Eyden. He is a member of the Cable Advisory Committee which reports to the Board of Selectmen of Winchester. He is also the Chair of the sub-committee that deals with community television.

Definitions and Structure

The important thing to remember when discussing public access cable television in Winchester is that the model of community television is used. In fact, Mike Lionne said, "We don't consider our operation public access, we consider it community television." He explains the difference this way:

Basically, if you look at the three forms--local origination, public access and community television, local origination is produced for and by the cable operator, generally ad revenue supported. Then if you go to the opposite extreme, you've got public access which in most cases in Massachusetts now the cable operator gives the town 3 to 5% of their gross as franchise fees to run a separate non-profit access foundation so that the cable operator's only real support is the 5% and the channel space on the cable system but beyond that has no commitment. Our position as a company is that we like to see a blend of the two, because at least in my past experience, I've seen that local origination is what we as a cable operator wants to see and I don't think that the community is well served by it (L.O.). Because the programming doesn't necessarily reflect

what the community wants to see. On the flip side my disfavor with public access is that depending upon the size of the community and what the 5% might actually turn into in terms of dollars in some very small communities 5% of a cable operator's franchise gross revenue isn't really enough to really operate a facility, enough to have adequate staffing, not enough to infuse good ongoing operations, purchase the necessary capital equipment or operating budget to hire enough staffing. So in some cases, the seed money is there but public access never really gets off the ground. We found in communities where we blend the two and formed community television is that we have a full-time professional staff to oversee the day to day operations of the facility and maintenance of the equipment and having equipment ready when public access or community access producers come in. That we are the professionals that can do the training and teach people to do it and encourage them and nurture them to produce programs. Knowing that sometimes it's a two way street we'll work on their program, although we don't like to do that, we really want to encourage their involvement, but by the same token, one hand washes the other. Sometime there may be some projects that we want to do as a company like an "Ask the Manager" type of program where we may need community volunteers to help on our end. I happen to think that the blend works a little bit better.

When I asked him to try to separate L.O. and access, he responded that it was difficult to do.

In terms of the ideas that get produced, I'd say they're much more community oriented ideas. In terms of: would those programs be produced if our staff wasn't involved with them... I think our staff is intricately involved with every program, but they are all with community producers. 80% of our programming is community oriented and 20% is more of an L.O. nature.

Allen Eyden confirmed this mode of operation. He said most locally produced programs

that are done in our area are more local origination where there is involvement by the paid staff to a greater or lesser degree. The local public access producer does the background work.

The differences in these definitions and conclusions begin to illustrate the problems with doing research in this area. Using their own definitions and perceptions the member of the Cable Advisory Committee has said he perceives that most of the shows fall under L.O. in his mind. On the other hand, Mike Lionne from Continental Cablevision says that only 20% is local origination oriented. Both would agree, no matter what they would call it, that staff are involved with the production of most of the programs that get produced in Winchester.

The community television policies in Winchester confirmed this mode of operation. These rules were drawn up by the cable company according to Allen Eyden. But even though staff is always involved, Mike Lionne said that the company does not influence any editorial decisions except for obscenity and libel. Producers sign off on a producer indemnification form and Continental is careful to uphold first amendment rights, according to Mr. Lionne.

The structure of access efforts in Winchester follows a community television model. This is where the cable company hires staff, rents or establishes a location for operations, attains and maintains equipment, and writes policies.

The staff trains community volunteers and are quite involved in the production of local shows. The budget and effort are difficult to separate in L.O. or public access. Within the access framework, there is little distinction between educational access, government access, and public access. In fact, the budget for Winchester is combined with two other studios run by Continental Cablevision and Winchester's portion was approximated by Mike Lionne as being an operating budget of \$95,000.

Goals/Success/Evaluation

None of the respondents for the Winchester system were aware of any formally stated goal for the public access efforts. They were asked to define success for public access. Their responses were quite similar. The theme expressed was involvement by the community and level of activity: were shows being produced, were they being watched, were they talked about. Mr. Eyden felt that the

number of viewers should be used as a measure of success. He felt the ultimate way of measuring the success of local programming efforts would be to find out if people would still subscribe to cable even if there was no local channel. Mr. Eyden felt that people in the community had definitely become more involved in local government and in the political process because of the availability of seeing selectmen's meetings on the local channel. Mr. Cronin felt that seeing a program through to completion was a measure of success.

When asked about the evaluation done for the Winchester system, the public hearing was referred to. The input from this meeting was reported by all respondents to be quite favorable with regard to local programming efforts. Mr. Eyden reported that there were "no complaints" and generally anyone who wanted to do a show could do it; there was enough time in the studio and there was equipment to do it. Mike Lionne said he brought viewership studies to the public hearing which reflected positively on the company's performance. He said they have done viewership studies that are surprising to people.

People have historically said 'No one watches local programming channels.'
We find that local programming channels often fare better than some of our basic cable channels or some of the broadcast channels. I'm not referring to CBS or NBC, but I am referring to some of the independent stations. Local programming

will often times place higher in the viewership studies than those other channels do. There is definitely a value and there are definitely people out there watching it.

Mr. Lionne also reported that volunteers spoke of their positive experience working with community television and that a video program which highlighted some of the local programming efforts was shown at the public hearing and was well received.

Mr. Eyden spoke of the Cable Advisory Committee's evaluation efforts. They used personal experience as sources of input into that was basically a discussion process. Mr. Eyden is active at the local production center and therefore, brought his direct experience to bear on the requests for changes. The problems that he experienced first hand came about as a result of using borrowed equipment for a production that was newer from another Continental studio. After using the newer cameras he found the Winchester cameras lacking in their picture quality. He also reported that equipment was breaking with increasing frequency. Sometimes, he would get calls that a town meeting looked terrible. He had worked on getting certain local events covered and expressed frustration that the current Program Director had some trouble in covering all the local events that were deemed important because the Program Director was unable to get volunteers to help. Mr.

Eyden felt that these events should not go uncovered by local television efforts and pushed for an additional staff person in the negotiations of the relicense. He had also experienced the need for a bigger studio. This was concluded for two reasons: 1. to get certain shots there were occasions where cameras had to be backed out into a hallway to get the picture composition desired and; 2. set storage for different shows was a problem with no room left to store sets for various shows.

Changes Requested

The informal evaluation process had brought to light several issues just mentioned. The cable company agreed that these were problems. They would address solutions for these problems and be willing to support their resolutions financially. A larger studio was sought, 65 thousand dollars of capital equipment was promised, and an additional staff person hired.

The only rough spot that was identified arising about the funding of public access was the request of the city to move the studio to a public building and have the cable company pay fair market rental rates on the space rented from the town. This was agreed to but Mr. Lionne felt that the objective of the request was not to improve the

situation for users but to generate more revenue for the town. Mr. Eyden confirmed this objective. He stated that they needed a bigger space and the town had unused space. The town is limited by law to \$5 per subscriber per year for the franchise fee. That is all the town can charge the cable company. The town was trying to generate revenue by having the studio space rented from the town.

In summary there was no systematic or direct evaluation reported by any of these respondents. Most evaluation was first hand information, public hearing input and telephone calls of complaints. Changes that were made were, for the most part, refinements of existing practices: larger studio, more staff, new equipment.

Standard

None of respondents from Winchester reported that any standard was used to compare public access to but they did report informal comparisons. Mike Lionne referred to his direct experience in the Arlington, MA access effort. He reported that in his opinion Arlington is successful and he judges public access efforts using Arlington as his personal standard. The Cable Advisory Committee member, Allen Eyden, reported that the committee had visited other

Continental studios. He feels he has used those as examples for comparison on an informal basis.

Current Issues

Question 24 was designed to draw out any problems with the present state of affairs with public access in a community. Mike Lionne articulated his goals as a manager of three community studios as his response. He wants to increase outreach efforts this year. He wanted to ask the staff to spread the word to community organizations about the resources and training available to them. Mr. Eyden, in his response, expressed some concern that the additional staff person that was hired as a result of the refranchising agreement has not resulted in more productions. This is a disappointment to him to the point where it has caused him to think more closely on the possibility of establishing a separate access corporation the next time the license is up for renewal. The next license is only 5 years away. He expressed an inability to influence the employees to pursue his objectives of more coverage for local events and felt that having a separate entity might be the way to go in the future to rectify this lack of influence over employees.

Subscribers Funding Access

Respondents gave opposing responses to the question about how cable subscribers feel about funding public access. Mr. Eyden of the Cable Advisory Committee of Winchester reported that Continental did a survey on public access in Winchester and that they had obtained a "generally favorable response." Most of the people who subscribe to cable watched one or more local cable productions. The impression was that they were generally in favor of public access and they supported a small portion of their cable bill funding the local access station. Mr. Eyden continued,

They were in favor of local access, and I'm sure they understood that they were paying for it. We know there's no such thing as a free ride.

It is not clear whether subscribers were specifically asked about the funding aspect and Mr. Lionne of Continental did not refer to subscribers in Winchester being asked about how they felt about funding access. He referred to a survey that asked how subscribers felt about various programs.

Mr. Lionne's response was quite the opposite:

I don't think our subscribers are consciously aware that they even fund it... Yet in some of our other communities like Wilmington, Burlington

and Billerica, where there's a separate public access foundation. We have a little tag on the bottom of our bill that says we're adding on five percent because that's going to go to fund your local access foundation. People get really upset about that. In our towns where we run the operation, they don't see it on their bill and I don't think they think about it.

No quantifiable information as to percentages of people who get upset was offered. At another point in the interview with Mr. Lionne, this subject area came up when talking about the philosophy of the company with regard to why his company does any local programming. He had said in response,

We think our subscribers think it's worthwhile. We like to think that we are offering something relatively unique with community programming; that if push came to shove, our subscribers would see a value and would think it's a worthwhile and unique service; that it's worth paying for.

The discrepancy remains unresolved as to whether subscribers realize they are paying for public access and if they do realize it, how they feel about it.

Potential Evaluation Directions

Mike Lionne said,

This is a tough question because it depends if you're the type of person who thinks it can be quantified in numbers or not. I measure it in terms of the number of organizations that are actually involved and the number of hours of programming we're producing. The other factor is

the diversity: how many different organizations are actually involved with us? Are we doing a good blend of programming? I'm hesitant to go too far with the quantity of programming because I don't want to see quantity and not quality.

When asked how many organizations would be "enough" he responded, "If we had every organization in Winchester involved that would be enough." When asked how many hours of programming were enough he replied,

Our license in Winchester requires us to produce at least 10 hours per week. Historically we've done 15 to 20 hours per week and if we can stay in that ballpark, it'd be fine, but again, that becomes a quantity versus quality issue. It's easy to fill the channel up with municipal meetings and religious services. I'm not sure there's a lot of quality there, but now let's look at those meetings and see if we can make them a little more diverse, maybe a round table discussion or other creative approaches... As far as quality is concerned, there really isn't anything in particular I look for because once again we don't want to be in the position of censoring if a program is boring or if it's good. Basically, if it will hold up on the cable system from a technical standpoint, we'll air it.

Responding to who should do the evaluation of public access efforts, Mike Lionne prefaced his answer by saying,

It depends on which side of the fence I want to sit on here. If I sit on the side of the fence of the cable operator, then I guess the ultimate answer is our subscribers because they pay for it. That's where the surveys we do come in. If the community isn't producing the programming, we the cable company or in partnership with the community should develop ideas to meet some of the programming desires of the community might have. The community producers should also be evaluating what's on the channel. The cable company should not evaluate the channel they should do it only through input from subscribers and community producers.

Mr. Lionne also comments on the difficulty of this area of research, he said,

You definitely asked questions that are the most difficult to deal with, the whole quality versus quantity and how do you quantify what you do.

Mr. Eyden recommends that the Cable Advisory Committee publicize the public hearings that are part of the license renewal process and "solicit public comment," and use complaints as a criteria to evaluate. He also said,

If the Cable Advisory Committee puts their ear to the ground, and listens to what people are saying... We could also track the number of people trained and the number of hours of volunteer time that they give back to the system. I think this is an area we fall short in, we train people and we run them through the course and then we abandon them. We never bother to follow-up on them to make sure they're coming back and giving back to the community what we trained them for.

Mr. Cronin, in evaluating public access, focused on programming. He would not look at quantity but rather the quality of what is produced and what groups, such as the senior citizens, are producing the programming. He explained, "Who is producing the programming, is it just staff related or is it reaching a varied audience." When I asked what he meant by quality, his response centered on diversity rather than production values. He said,

I think the most important thing is to look at the diversity of the programming. The production aspects in public access may not be the best to start out with, but I feel that people, with experience do get better.

As a judge of diversity he would look at "How many organizations are currently active." Mr. Cronin, when asked who should be the evaluator of public access, felt that "the viewing audience through questionnaires would be the only way you could reach them." These questionnaires would be used not as ratings on which program decisions are based but more to "determine what's missing" from the community programming. He spoke from past experience when the cable company did such a study. The findings, as he recalls, found municipal programming being cited as the most often watched on the local channel but subsequent decisions were not based on these findings as reported to this researcher. This is an important point since in a traditional line of thinking surveys are used to determine "ratings" and ratings determine a show's continuance or cancellation. The primary way the information would be used in Mr. Cronin's vision is to develop more programming if specific programming was desired by the survey respondents.

Case #2 - Monson, Massachusetts

Preface: Monson

Monson is located in the western part of the state, about 15 miles east of Springfield. Monson is a rural

community with almost no minority presence. The income level of the community was stated by Mr. Olchick as being between 18 and 22 thousand dollars. The cable system that now encompasses both the town of Monson and the neighboring town of Palmer. The cable system passes about 2600 homes and it was reported tthat there were 1317 subscribers. The system has 52 channels of which 46 were activated at the time of this research.

In attempting to interview a member of the Cable Advisory Committee of Monson, it was determined that at the moment, Monson does not have a Cable Advisory Committee, according to Grace Makepeace. She is the current President of a non-profit access foundation that used to be called Monson Public Access and since the last contract was signed in 1990 is called Municipal Public Access. The Board of Directors of Municipal Public Access is the closest functioning equivalent to the usual Cable Advisory Committee in Massachusetts communities. Therefore, Makepeace was interviewed for this research. The person in charge of access on a day to day basis was also interviewed.

Structure

Monson has had public access language in their cable television contract with Times Mirror Inc. since 1975 but it wasn't until 1985 that anything happened with it. Grace Makepeace recounts the beginning of public access this way:

It goes back to one man who came to town when he retired. He had been a producer for one of the major networks so he had some background. He said, "They don't have public access cable? Why?" and he came down to town hall to read the cable contract and there was a paragraph or two in it that offered equipment to set up a public access studio. Nobody had ever read it. No one had come forth with the energy to think if it was a good idea. James Faichney was that man. He educated the selectmen. Then he acted as a negotiator to get public access going in Monson. The selectmen knew they couldn't understand half what they (cable company) were telling them. The selectmen did not want to be put in a position of negotiating with the cable contract.

According to Makepeace, Mr. Faichney spearheaded the formation of Monson Public Access as a non-profit organization about six years ago. About six years ago, the cable company provided some equipment and training. For the last six years a small group of volunteers has televised Monson's selectmen's meetings. There was no other programming other than the meetings. But that is about to change.

Mr. Faichney died about three years ago but before he died, he recommended that the selectmen hire a consultant for the negotiating the refranchise. He recommended Merrill Olchick. The selectmen followed the recommendation and Mr. Olchick was hired as a consultant in 1988 by the town of Monson. Palmer, a neighboring town with three times the population of Monson had a refranchising coming up with the same company. Mr. Olchick was hired by Palmer also. This is important in that ultimately the the towns decided to negotiate with a combined subscriber base and to share their public access efforts. That is how the name change from "Monson" to "Municipal" Public Access came about. Grace Makepeace comments, "We didn't have to changed our logo if we change from 'Monson' to 'Municipal'". Currently the plans are for Municipal Public Access to serve all access functions for the two communities. Mr. Olchick is currently the CEO of Municipal Public Access and is the other person who was interviewed for this research. Because much of the current structure came about as a result of the refranchise process it will be discussed further under the Changes Requested section.

Definitions

Mr. Olchick defines public access as

a program provided for in a franchise agreement between a municipality and a cable company in

which all decisions: programming, financial and otherwise are made by a publicly elected board of directors.

According to this definition both the Rhode Island and Connecticut communities that were studied as well as the Winchester access effort would not constitute public access. It is important to remember that for the purpose of this research, public access is more broadly defined as a system of production and distribution technology which is made available to the public for communicating whatever it chooses to. This research project has included asking respondents for their definition of public access to verify the range of definitions that exists and to understand the context in which the respondents answered the posed questions.

Grace Makepeace's definition is more results-oriented than structurally-oriented. She said,

Because you can not get opinions over network television without cost, public access is an opportunity for issues, debates political or environmental, for everyone to participate at no cost in a network of information and seminars.

Goals

Both Mr. Olchick and Ms. Makepeace's articulation of goals for public access focused on producing programs. Mr.

Olchick said, "The goal was to share information freely."

Ms. Makepeace said,

To make the system available so that any group knows that if they follow certain rules they can produce and show a program.

The goals reported by Ms. Makepeace, as stated in the original articles of incorporation, are generally worded to give responsibility for administering and promoting public access and to assist the board of selectmen of Monson with public access matters. Mr. Olchick said that there may be some formally stated goals in the operating procedures of the access center but that the Board of Directors were still working on those and they are not available at the time of this interview.

Success

Ms. Makepeace's responses to defining success focused on the level of involvement of people. High viewership and people calling in about the programming as well as people willing to work on producing the programs to get sufficient number of hours of programming was the theme of her response. She did not quantify her response.

Mr. Olchick articulated the most basic goal of any of the respondents in the study by saying he would define success if public access "continued to exist" in the community. He added to this that the second part of success for him would be that "no one who wants to use public access is turned away." The third component of success that he mentioned was "people in the town talking about our programming." Mr. Olchick did not offer any discrete numbers of people talking about the programming.

When asked about the impact access has had on the community both respondents spoke of how the town's people had become more aware of town governmental players, process and the "sticky" problems that confront town government. Also mentioned was the emergence of the feeling of empowerment with regard to developing programs that meet their own needs.

Evaluation

The franchising process in Monson started about three years before the renewal date. About that time Mr. Faichney got ill and Mr. Olchick was called in to the Board of Selectmen and asked to provide leadership for the

process. Mr. Olchick subsequently was also hired by the town of Palmer for the same function. Part of the refranchise process is to have a public hearing so that input from citizens can be collected on the needs of the community. The selectmen asked Mr. Olchick to put that public hearing together.

Mr. Olchick laid down a lot of ground work before that meeting occurred. Olchick told me,

Before we had that public meeting on which we based our needs statement I spent several months meeting with various groups explaining to them some of the possibilities there would be in the use of public access television. Most of the people had no experience with public access but because I could use my experience to explain it to them, this added to their willingness to get that public hearing as filled as possible with needs statements. I met with every civic and governmental group that was willing to listen. It's impossible to know anything more than what's already in your head. If that's all we are going to know, there would be nothing to talk about.

Since the people did not know what public access could do Olchick took on an extensive educational campaign telling them about the possibilities. Mr. Olchick did not feel that Monson's exposure to the 6 years of public access efforts which televised the selectmen's meetings was much of a factor in the support for expanded public access efforts that were articulated at the public hearing.

Neither Mr. Olchick nor Ms. Makepeace reported any efforts to evaluate past access efforts. The evaluation process was, in many regards, done as if the community had not had a public access organization since 1985. The people interviewed felt that this small effort was watched but was done by such a small group and was so specific that it only narrowly exposed the cable audience to public access. The educational process that Mr. Olchick pursued is echoed as a model proposed by Sue Miller Buske, a consultant in the field of public access as a logical way to gain support for public access. People who do not know what public access is will not support it and come to a public meeting and ask for it.

Mr. Olchick said the next time the contact is renewed, "public access will have a track record and a whole different set of criteria will be used to evaluate." Even though Monson met the articulated research criteria of a mature public access community, because of the small scale of its efforts no evaluation was done in the community. As a result, the Monson case was not able to contribute much to a historical perspective of how access efforts are currently being evaluated except to say that their small effort was not evaluated. The process of refranchising followed in Monson was more similar to a community that has never had access. There were a few

enlightening diversions that one would not expect from a community that had never had access before. These will be discussed later.

The process followed in Monson was that of a broad educational effort for the community. This educational effort led up to a public meeting and from that public meeting, a needs statement was developed by Mr. Olchick.

Changes Requested

As mentioned before the negotiations process linked the town of Monson and Palmer together. This was a big change from the original license from which certain advantages would come. The combining of subscriber numbers was critical in amassing the volume of money that would be needed to fulfill the expanded public access activity that the public requested at the public hearing. Merrill Olchick explained that the public needs that were articulated were then planned out and dollar figures for equipment, operating expenses, and staff were attached. Using his past experience, Mr. Olchick and the Board of Directors developed the budget. The public had asked for a mobile studio, an access center and money for the operation of both. This was a large change from the old contract.

From the old contract, only some \$200 worth of equipment and a little training had been acquired from the cable company, according to both respondents. The costs for what the public articulated they wanted was more than the 5% maximum that the cable company can be asked by law to give to financially support such efforts. Since 5% was the maximum, Merrill Olchick asked for that much money and access got that amount of money.

The cable company had some reservations about being as generous as was requested. They cited as the reason for their reluctance their experience with other small communities, such as Monson, where the money and equipment is requested but then is never used. Mr. Olchick explained,

The question they had, which was legitimate was whether putting in that kind of money would result in anything substantial or was a loss leader.

Olchick reported that this hurdle was overcome by including language in the contract wherein Municipal Public Access guaranteed a minimum number of hours of programming per month. These minimums would increase over the 10 year life of the contract. If the public access organization did not meet the minimum number of hours the cable company would be able to reduce its financial support. Olchick reported that many times he hears of the access corporation and the cable company taking on adversarial roles. He was happy to say that did not happen in Monson. He pointed out that,

If access does well the cable company will benefit from it (more subscribers) and if that happens, we will benefit through increased budgets.

It is important to note for the purposes of this research, that the only criteria for future funding articulated by the two people interviewed from Monson was the number of hours of programming each month. As we shall see, these leaders of public access in that community may have other thoughts on how public access should be evaluated, but the only language in the contract connects funding with the quantity of programming.

If we ask the cable company to make investments we owe them an honest effort on our part to make good use of what they've given us. So we gave them promises of programming,

said Merrill Olchick.

The importance of having an experienced, knowledgeable negotiator for the town was articulated by Grace Makepeace. She said,

The cable company could snow us if we didn't know what was possible. Merrill's knowledge and forcefulness in negotiating made all the difference.

Standard

The Monson respondents said there was no standard used to compare their public access efforts to. Merrill said

there was no standard used per se but that the educational process he proliferated through out the town drew from the experiences and occurrences of what other towns had done with public access so that in an 'informal enlightening mode' citizens began to think about what possible outcomes they might want to develop to meet their needs in Monson.

Current Issues

Because Monson is really in a start up phase where the studio and equipment are in the process of being acquired, the respondents did not have any thoughts on what could be done better. They are currently implementing the improvements from the refranchise process.

Subscribers Funding Access

Olchick feels that in the beginning of an access effort, the subscribers have very little or limited experience with public access. Therefore, public access has to be sold on what is to come. He was saying that it won't be until they have something to evaluate that they will have feelings on funding public access.

Grace Makepeace on the other hand, feels that for the most part subscribers do not realize that they are funding public access. She said,

If they knew that their rate could come down by two dollars a month, if the cable operator did not fund public access, I would be willing to bet that fifty percent of subscribers would take the rate reduction.

At another point in the interview, Makepeace had said when defining public access "...for everyone to participate at no cost..." Perhaps the exponents of public access have a responsibility to make it clearer to people that public access does cost money.

Potential Evaluation Directions

Merrill Olchick has been involved with public access for 15 years and his experience was evidenced in his response to potential evaluation directions. He was clear and confident in his answer. The first evaluation component he feels should be looked at is if the contractual agreement for the number of hours is fulfilled. He would also suggest a questionnaire be sent to every volunteer producer, whether they did one show three years ago or have done and are continuing to do an ongoing series of shows. This questionnaire would focus

on how the producers were treated and their comfort level with their public access experience. He also recommends that subscribers be questioned about their feelings about the type of programming they would like to see. The only criteria which could be used to evaluate public access that Mr. Olchick articulated was the number of hours of programming. The other information that he prescribes be collected would be for input for improvement rather than setting standards. The evaluation should, according to Mr. Olchick, be carried out by the Board of Directors of the public access corporation.

Grace Makepeace was much more exploratory in her responses to possible evaluation methodologies to be used. She focused on using the mechanism of public hearings. They all seem to think that hearing are a good way to determine a community's feelings. Beyond public hearings she was unsure of how to proceed, since volunteers make up the efforts of public access and "you can't mandate volunteers to do something." When asked about criteria to use, Ms. Makepeace said,

The Nielsen ratings of who watches what is not answering the public access needs. Just because there's only one percent that want to watch a particular subject that might still be useful. What would we be evaluating it for?

Makepeace's response to the research question exposed many more questions and did not provide answers to those questions. She did conclude that programming with the broadest scope was one target that could be aimed for.

Case #3 - Newton, Massachusetts

Preface: Newton In Transition

Newton is an affluent suburb of Boston that is characterized by dense suburban development and much commercial activity. The cable system passes about 30,000 homes, of which about 16,500 were reported to be subscribers. The community is 30-40% Jewish, is home to a small Chinese community, has a majority of Republicans and is economically and educationally "above average," according to Martain Alpert. When this research was conducted the cable system had a 60 channel capacity with 56 channel currently activated.

Newton's cable company, Continental, had provided community television to Newton since August of 1981. During the negotiations of the relicensing process a transition to a separate public access system was hammered out. This transition makes Newton a rich source to study

for this research but it also made it quite difficult. These difficulties manifested themselves in several ways as I attempted to study Newton. Because there is the old and the new to be studied in Newton, I attempted to interview the person who was now in charge of access and the person who had been in charge of access. Attempts met with difficulties that in the end had positive results. Initial inquiries as to who to speak to regarding the public access television lead me to speak with Amy Silverstein of Newton's Planning Office. I was told by her that the Planning Office had done a lot of the background work on the relicensing agreement and a lot of educating of the players involved, namely the Cable Advisory Committee. But when the researcher solicited the cooperation and participation of the Planning Office in this study my request for an in-depth interview was denied.

The reasons given were several. First of all, the planning office felt that the timing was bad. They were still negotiating some aspects of the license in the Spring of 1991 and did not want to ruffle any feathers by speaking frankly in this report. Secondly, the negotiations had been so difficult that speaking honestly of them might stir up old issues if Continental people were ever to read the report. So even though Amy Silverstein by many accounts was the chief architect behind the new structure that access was to adopt, she was not interviewed. Her office

did however, provide me with two very useful documents: Article 6, of the Cable Renewal License and a section of "Highlights of Continental and Renewal Proposal Section I. "PEG" (Public, Education, Government) Access Programming."

Another way that the transition necessitated some flexibility and accommodation in methodology was due to the newness of the hired Executive Director for the newly formed public access corporation. George Preston, the Executive Director, felt that since he had just been on the job for a matter of a few weeks, he could not provide the perspective called for in this research. This research is largely historical in its perspective. He felt that this historical perspective would be better provided by Rika Welsh. Ms. Welsh had been hired by Newton as a consultant on public access matters. Over the past year, she has provided a number of educational workshop sessions focused on access for the members of the Board of Directors of the Newton Cable Access Corporation as well as technical advice. Mr. Preston deferred to Ms. Welsh to help with the research. Ms. Welsh agreed to participate but because of the unique relationship she had with the new access corporation and because she had not been part of the negotiations, the standard questionnaire was not an appropriate tool. The questionnaire was scrapped and an open ended discussion took place which centered on what

she had done for the access effort and her impressions of what direction the Board of Directors will pursue.

This flexibility lead to unique perspectives provided by Ms. Welsh, and also as will be seen, contributed to a broader perspective that only someone who had been working in access for 15 years could provide. My exposure to this caliber of knowledge and professionalism with regard to public access has influenced me greatly, so much so that I feel any further research along the lines of this study would be advised to use this level of experience as a criterion for who to interview in pursuing the question of how public access should be evaluated.

Another difficulty was that the newness of the transition meant that operating rules and policies were still being worked on by the Board of Directors and were not available. It also meant that there were no numbers available on current operations such as current numbers of active producers or the number of producers trained in the last year for the access corporation had not yet started opening its doors. When this research was done in May, 1991, the access corporation was still in the turmoil of buying equipment and renovating their new space.

The person currently in charge of public access was not involved in this research but the consultant who had been used was interviewed. The one further adaption to the

research method was made to accommodate the Newton reality. I did not speak to the Continental Program Director who had run the community television operation before and during the relicensing process. This employee of Continental had been reassigned since Continental, as of March 1, 1991, was no longer doing any local programming in Newton; as per the license agreement all access programming would be done by the new separate access corporation. The General Manager of Continental felt it would be inappropriate for me to interview an employee who had been reassigned to new duties but he was personally willing to contribute his time and share his expertise. I got the sense that there had been some heavy negotiations and that he was protecting the reassigned employee from remembering troubled times. He had participated closely in the negotiations process and also supervises several Program Directors in nine communities served by Continental Cable. His perspective was an unexpected source of an upper management point of view on public access.

The one component of my study methods which did not need to be adapted for Newton was the interviewing of members of the Cable Advisory Committee of Newton. Mr. Martin Alpert agreed to participate in the research. He has served on the Cable Advisory Committee through the initial franchising and now through the relicensing process.

In our operation, it's all one and the same. Public access was a term that was used in the earlier years of the past decade. It's been redefined to community television. When I sign their time cards, I did not differentiate between L.O. and access because you are talking about a definition that is vague. Let me give you an example: Public access, is that defined as the number of hours one of our employees would put into a training workshop where there may or may not be any true video production that comes out of that training effort but our people put in two to three hours per week for an eight week period. That workshop is open to the public so is that public access? Conversely, we are requested by the city to go out and cover on event of public interest. Because we are producing or covering that, is that locally originated or is it public access? The definition varies from community to community and that's why I fall back to the term community television. It would be tough for me to tell you where their time was split.

The definition for community television has been explored previously in the Winchester case section.

It is the opinion of this researcher that the training would be public access and the coverage, if done by staff, would be local origination. If that same coverage were done by community producers, it would be access. In public access the tools, training and distribution are provided but the choice of what to cover is made independently by the community producer. Mr. Doar would probably agree with this interpretation based on his own definition found in the next section. The difficulty is perhaps more in the fact that Mr. Doar did not keep separate records of the categories more then it was a definition issue.

Rika Welsh was able to add to the historical understanding of the concept of the community television model. She defined and explained community television as

...run by the cable company but facilitating the community. The community television model was developed by American Cable systems then Continental, in communities where they couldn't afford to support both local origination and access operations separately because the subscriber base was not big enough to support it. They need about a thousand subscriber base so they said, 'Let's combine it.' The cable company will run it and they'll get people from the community to come in for training and we'll make this sort of a mixture. Partially because they didn't want to just say we'll give the community X number of dollars. They wanted to continue to have some control. I set up the first of those systems in Arlington which is Arlington Community Television and that was a very access oriented organization. We had two or three hundred people coming in and out of there every month. Annual reports showed the high programming level, the participation at the community level was extremely high but I come from an access background. That was the prototype that all American Cable systems followed. American got an enormously good reputation in the cable industry for its local programming and they found it to be really something that helped their business, gave them stature in the community. They put local programming into systems they bought even where it was not required in the license because they felt it was good business, good marketing and good PR. In a lot of ways, it's a very inexpensive way to do that. Plus a local programming entity, run well, is the cable company's ear on how the cable company is doing in the community as a business.

In her point of view local origination is anything that the cable company decides to do where they go ahead to cover an event is an editorial decision made by the cable company.

The community television operations in Newton had four staff members. It was run on a day to day basis by the Program Director who reported to Mr. Doar at the regional level. The Newton staff was helped by an area support team that included a technician who, on as needed basis, would look after the repair and replacement of equipment. There was also a Community Relations Manager who would work with press releases for nine communities.

Rika Welsh's perspective on why cable companies such as Continental get involved with community programming were confirmed by some of Tony Doar's comments:

Access is not a revenue producer. There are other ways to measure your investments like satisfaction and involvement. We try to meet a community's needs. Sometimes we help to create that need by raising awareness. It's invaluable and could not be replaced by a local newspaper. Community television comes up at renewal. Newton realized the value of community television. Now, to their credit, they want to try it on their own. They made it one of the largest components of their negotiations.

Structure and Definitions after March 1, 1991

One point that needs to be made about the community television model is the difference in the title that the community television model uses to refer to members of the public participating in programming versus the title access corporations tend to use. Access uses the term access "producer" while those involved with a community television

model use the word "volunteer." There is a significant difference in the implications of the two words.

Volunteers for the most part are asked to lend a helping hand to achieve an already shaped objective while access producer implies much more editorial and product control being denoted.

Newton has formed a separate non-profit access corporation. It will get capital equipment budget of \$300,000 and an annual operating budget of \$250,000 and additional renovation monies. All of this money is derived from 4% of the gross subscriber fees collected in Newton, according Mr. Alpert. The new access corporation will have, according to Rika Welsh, a Board of Directors of nine members. To start with, all members were appointed by the mayor but as their terms expire the current by-laws state that three of the board members will be elected by membership and six are self appointing. The Board may see fit to modify the by-laws in the near future since they were basically a copy of Malden Access Television's. These were used primarily to expedite the process of getting Newton's incorporation papers filed. There was one staff memberin May, the Executive Director, George Preston. There will probably be a total of about four. Ms. Welsh projects this staff level based on the budget available, the size of the community and her experience. The Executive Director will report to the board of directors.

Mr. Alpert believes the mayor appointed the board with an eye toward getting a wide cross section of diverse people to serve on the Board of Directors.

Mr. Alpert's response to being asked to define public access was this:

That could be a lengthy answer. There are many different kinds of programming that could be considered access programming. They fall basically into two categories: individuals who put together their own show and on the other hand, groups like a religious organization which have programs already made that they'd like to put on. Anything that anyone from the community wants to put on as long as it's not offensive, they have a right to put on.

Mr. Doar's definition of public access is as follows:

My personal definition of public access is visibility and availability of both the equipment and training to the community that the operator serves. The operator has a responsibility to make the public aware a studio exists in that community that is open to the community and available for their usage. The access part comes in when the public is trained in the usage, then, not unlike a library, equipment should be made available periodically for use by the public.

From Rika Welsh I tried to get a sense of how the Board of Directors of the newly formed access corporation would define public access. She responded by telling me about the workshops she had conducted with the Board to get them working together. She said,

The workshops got them to talk about their mission statement, what kind of a Board they wanted to be, what their perception of public access is. The President of their board thought it was going to be a commercial entity. They are still floundering with a definition of public access.

As I left it in the hands of their new Executive Director, George Preston, they were somewhat confused and they were thinking that for Newton it would have to be a hybrid where staff does some production and volunteers do other productions. I tried to tell them that if they do that, they're back to the community television model and who decides what the staff is going to do? Are you giving preferential treatment for some people in the community? You have a real possibility in that case to create some bad feelings out there that can work against you in the long run even though in the short run it seems to facilitate things. I don't know if they are going to pursue that hybrid direction. One has to be extremely careful when you say we'll do some things and not others. A public access facility is supposedly run on a first come, we treat everyone the same basis. Do you treat programs that the mayor requests differently? If you aren't careful on how you do that you can become perceived as someone who has been a party to that mayor and when the mayor changes you bring into play a lot of people who are there to work against you. If you don't stay apolitical it's your own fault when it blows up in your face. In fact, that's a good place to set the example, to treat the mayor just like anyone else because that way you gain a reputation of being a resource for everyone. You don't want access being vied for by different parties. There were several people on the Newton Board who said the way the cable company is handling it does not satisfy the needs of the community. That the company was not doing enough training and they were picking and choosing what they wanted to cover in the community. The Newton Board was saying they want an entity where they have some say and input that will provide a different resource for Newton. But then when confronted with, 'that means you treat everyone the same, that you open your door to all,' then they said 'Oh, I'm not sure we want that part.' So it seems even when you have a separate non-profit access organization the Board of Directors can influence how the access effort operates and what gets produced and what does not.

Newton Success/Goals

On the question of what the goals are and how to define success, Mr. Doar cited specific goals that he articulates to his staff on a yearly basis. Reading from a 1990 plan for community television he said,

Some of the goals are to achieve Massachusetts Cable Commission Awards for community television, and to receive an A.C.E, Academy of Cable Excellence nomination, and we want to increase the number of volunteers in the workshops.

He feels that if there are pre-established criteria that recognize excellence, he wants to do what he can to meet those criteria. He continued by saying that:

If the Massachusetts Cable Commission says we are going to be the ones to determine what a quality production is, then we want to work toward meeting that level of expectation. We would set these with our community producers [staff] and say do you think we can do that this year and what do we need to do to achieve that goal.

Mr. Doar told me of a program called "Survival Story" which received national recognition. He pointed out that this production was done by employees of Continental. It is important to note that the NFLCP, National Federation of Local Cable Production, has awards in overall access excellence which are not on Mr. Doar's goal list. These awards are categorized so that staff and access producers have separate categories. "As success related to volunteers, we want to graduate as many volunteers as we can," Mr. Doar said. He also explained that between the communities in his region there is a friendly competition to see who can graduate more volunteers.

Mr. Doar sees the development of goals stemming from the definition of public access:

If you meet your definition you've achieved your goal. The goal is to reach out to the community and give them an unusual and unique opportunity to use T.V., to share with their fellow residents ideas and events of mutual and varied interest and bring that into their neighbor's home.

When asked how he would define success for public access cable television, he first said,

It would be up to the community to decide how they would define it and to determine if we've been successful.

When asked how this might be done, Mr. Doar suggested a phone number as part of the end credits on a program so people could call in. He also suggested having a survey by mail once a year asking subscribers if they have watched the local channel. Then his answer turned to focus on the audience,

Do you have an audience for your programming? We have done surveys by mail that ask if people have tuned into the community channel, and sixty percent of respondents said they do watch community television. Sixty percent, that's a fairly significant number.

When asked what percentage of residents had responded, he reported between thirteen to fifteen percent. He then described that the survey they had done included questions about what they would like to see on community television, their favorite locally produced show, if they watch the coverage of town meetings, ranking the appeal of different

formats of shows such as talk shows, political shows, etc. The survey also asked whether they would be interested in volunteering to help with community television and asking for any additional comments.

Mr. Alpert was more inclined in his answers defining success to refer to what the new Board of Directors would come up with in the future for their goals but he did say,

I should think they'd want a broad base of participation and a broad spectrum of subjects to be covered. Hopefully, they'll be of interest to the city.

About formally stated goals Mr. Alpert referred to Article 6 of the Renewal License.

Mr. Alpert, unlike Mr. Doar, does not think the success of public access should be measured by viewership. His response to the question as asked was,

The viewership is actually pretty small compared to regular broadcast channels so it's not the number of viewers, even if some small number watch and derive some benefit from it. Those that are interested will watch and that's fine.

I asked him how he knew the numbers were small and he replied that the local paper recently did a survey. Ms. Houston [1991] of the TAB staff wrote an article called "TAB Survey; Prices panned; programs a hit." That survey indicated 32.6% watch community access TV channel. It is interesting to point out that Mr. Doar reported sixty percent of subscribers who responded to the survey reported

they watched the local channel. This was "fairly significant" in his opinion.

Audience is one way to measure success; if no one is watching, the producers should realize that the exercise in production is a self development effort rather than a way of reaching an audience. Some common ground for comparing audience numbers would make sense so that one person wouldn't say it's very small and another say it's fairly significant. Perhaps, we should not, as Mr. Alpert suggests, compare access audience numbers to broadcast television audience but comparing this year's audience numbers to last year's numbers or comparisons to the numbers attained in other communities would be a more viable success measure.

Mr. Alpert also focused on participation in his response to defining success for public access cable television but he could not articulate how much participation would be enough to deem the access effort a success. He also said the Cable Advisory Committee needed to listen for "comments in the community, letters, reports in the newspapers" to determine the success of the public access effort. Also at another point in the interview, he said,

I'm not sure that every town would want a separate non-profit organization, if there is not a lot of involvement the thing could be a complete dud.

Rika Welsh, from her perspective of working with the Newton access corporation's Board of Directors in a number of workshops, said the Board of Directors are probably not able to define success since they haven't quite yet really defined the specifics of their access center. She offered her definition of success:

Well first of all, its how well you form an organization that becomes a really used resource in the community. That could be measured in the number of hours of programming, the number of hours of training, the number of people who are involved. First of all, you have to build something that the entire community feels comfortable with and feels they have access to. If people aren't coming to your access center and you don't have interested people, what do you have? You have to pull from the community and have a high level of involvement with the community. I'm not sitting in my office. I sit on other boards in the community like the Chamber of Commerce and the Y.M.C.A. You have to be out there where people will talk to you and will call you if they hear that someone's nose is ruffled. That's the kind of network that really affects the longevity of public access. The difference between ten and fifteen hours a week of programming is not going to be the critical difference. If staff is doing those hours they don't have time to get involved with the community. They are too busy doing production. If you are in the studio doing training you're talking to people but are they happy with what they got? Lots of access staff get burned out because they get so involved in the day to day aspects that they don't get a sense of how they're interfacing with the community. That's part of having a Board of Directors that you need to be in touch with on a one to one basis, because they are your feelers into the community. Newton has not reached that level of defining success, to reach the more sophisticated nuances of success will be down the road. They will probably, as many access centers do, look upon success as how do we compare in the number of people we train or the number of hours that we have on and that's valid for the beginning. I would hope that they would move on

to how is access perceived in the community and what role it plays. That's hard to measure. It's just as important to have high school kids down at the access center learning things, gaining skills. Maybe you have fifteen high school kids working on a football game. They will only be making a two hour piece of programming but what has been gained through the process that involved team work and the positive attitude of the kids producing that is where its true value lies. There are things that are impossible to measure.

She did not ever mention audience levels or subscriber awareness of public access specifically as part of a measure of success, although her answer says that public access must be widely used. There is an implied knowledge on the part of subscribers that public access facilities and distribution is there for them. If using a level of participation as an indicator for success is valid, it is interesting to note that Welsh made the following comment in the course of the interview:

Newton has a more active bulletin board in the first month it was in operating than Continental did in all the time they were running it.

Programming from the new access corporation has not yet started, only the bulletin board is operating.

Evaluation

When asked whether there was any evaluation of access efforts Martin Alpert of Newton's Cable Advisory Committee said,

From the company's point of view, Continental never evaluated. They gave what ever they did high marks. They were not about to criticize any of their efforts. The Cable Advisory Committee here has spent about half their meetings discussing what could be improved with local cable programming efforts. We can't do much to control the other programming on the cable except to look for more channels at no extra cost. The Cable Advisory Committee did a lot of discussing about community television. We had people who were involved with that and with local government, speak to the committee. For instance, the League of Women Voters used the channel. They told us what was going on.

The researcher asked for specific comments that the Committee received but Mr. Alpert said,

Nothing specific, just the cumulative experience and the turn over in the number of people running the community television effort.

So from Mr. Alpert's report, the mode of evaluation was mainly discussion.

Tony Doar said,

We didn't do any evaluation per se on our end and I didn't see anything from the city side. If there was something, it was not shared with us in terms of any analysis. Basically, we got the sense from our negotiations for relicense that we had done a great job getting it started in Newton and now the city wanted to take a crack at it. It was an informal idea that became more structured as we moved along.

The research did not determine where the seed or impetus for having a separate non-profit access corporation came from. A brief phone conversation with the Newton Planning Office revealed that they educated the Cable Advisory Committee about this aspect of cable. If the

research could have gotten the cooperation of the Planning Office for an interview, more about the beginnings of the change might have been made clear. The only specific piece of data that was articulated was that through informal discussions the Cable Advisory Committee had become aware that some folks were not happy with the current system and that turnover in the Program Director position in the Newton system was perceived as a problem. The Cable Advisory Committee did recommend the change to the Mayor.

Since Rika Welsh did not have any involvement with the refranchising process this question was not asked of her.

Changes Requested

According to Mr. Doar, the request for proposal from the city of Newton to Continental

put the lion share of their proposal geared toward community programming.

A separate non-profit organization was proposed. In the end this is what was agreed to, with Continental providing four percent of gross subscriber revenue to the non-profit access corporation to fund their efforts. Additionally, there was agreement on \$425,000 dollars for capital equipment and renovations for the access corporation's new studio. The four percent is estimated to mean an annual

operating budget of \$250,000. Tony Doar has estimated that the community television operation that he supervised in Newton had an annual operating budget of \$200,000. So the annual operating budget has increased by \$50,000.

Mr. Alpert explains the issues behind the request to change this way:

I'm not sure that the new way is going to be that different. They had public access. The employees managed it. They certainly knew what they were doing, they've been in the business long enough. One of the main reasons we felt we wanted a change is that the local Program Director was an employee of the company. Over the years, we found that the Program Director doesn't stay long. If they are good, they don't stay long and if they're bad, they don't stay long. Half have been very good and half have been poor. The reason they don't stay is that they don't pay them that much. You see it's a stepping stone. It's not a career position in the company. People move around the company and they go on to bigger and better things. The Program Director may make fifteen thousand dollars. Well, you are not going to keep a very good person for that kind of money and each time someone left, the continuity was interrupted because that person was really in charge of the entire program of everything that was going on. We felt that if we had someone hired by local people, directed and guided and instructed by local people and paid substantially more money, which is the case, that they would get a better person and the person would concentrate their efforts on learning all about the local community, all about the city of Newton, what goes on here, everything that is important and who would have a much better feeling for what should or could be broadcast. That's the reason for it. Now, of course, they will be spending more money than the local cable company did. It's in the personnel. We're not going to have any better equipment or any better studio or anything else. It's the people that are running it. Not that the cable company didn't do a good job or that they didn't want to do a good job. They were spending money and they certainly wanted the best results for the money that was spent. It's just a question of

practices. In order for someone to really know what's going on in the community they must be a part of everything here. The local channel has been successful because they have had a lot of participation. The local people tried to tell the local Program Director what was going on various meetings. Sometimes these things were listened to and sometimes they were not. So people got frustrated and stopped volunteering and spending their time.... I believe the new Executive Director's salary range is between thirty and forty thousand... Some Program Directors were only there six months to a year and it really takes a couple of months before they know what's going on . . . The main expense other than rent was personnel and they really had a low budget for that. Not less than any other community but we felt it was not adequate. They weren't in a position to change it because it is a company that has many licences and they have entities like this in dozens of cities and towns, if they started to pay one Director a lot more money it would upset their whole scheme of things and would interfere with their company procedures....They knew the reason. We weren't happy with the budget for personnel. We wanted a person to stay on the job longer. Obviously that required a higher salary level for a higher caliber person. The type of people, I understand, that were interviewed were higher caliber, the type of people who would never, never offer to go to work for Continental doing that kind of work. They were completely different. This person would be more or less autonomous. They answer to a board. They are not just an employee of some big company.

Rika Welsh provides a slightly different perspective to the personnel issue:

You can have turnover if you get someone who really tries to get into the community and tries to do more public access type things, to do a lot of training. That's not the cable company's agenda. The cable company's agenda is for staff to go out and make the mayor look good, people who are important in the community look good, therefore, making the cable company look good. They aren't there to empower the community. You may get a Program Director who is too access minded for the Continental agenda. There's that component. It is very clear. If that is not valued you are going to

lose that person. These things make the community television model difficult to foresee any continuity with so it doesn't really accomplish what the community needs.

The continuity in the separate non-profit corporation that has a Board of Directors is seen by some to come from the board. Which, although its (Board) composition will change will probably not have wide swings of character. Also, the board is in control. This issue of control was mentioned by both Mr. Alpert and Ms. Welsh. Mr. Alpert said the impact from the board would guide the Executive Director and the board would make hiring decisions for at least the Executive Director position. He also said, in relationship to the issue of control: "I think they would rather do public access themselves. The main reason being it would cost them less money." With regard to control, Ms. Welsh stated,

....partially because they don't want to just say we'll give the community X number of dollars. The cable company wanted to continue to have some control.

So the perception is shared that control is part of the change from cable company run access to separate non-profit organization run access.

Summarizing the changes requested, they were: more community control through a different structure, higher caliber person in charge, and more money for the operating budget.

Standard

Mr. Martin Alpert said there was no set standard used to compare public access efforts to when that question was asked of him. At other points in the interview though, he had said that Continental had done a reasonably good job but he did not articulate an objective standard which he used to make that assessment. He reports at different places in the interview that the funding requested was determined by what was "under the law the maximum we could get," and he spoke of the legal counsel that the city hired named Peter Epstein, who was an expert on cable negotiations in Massachusetts. Mr. Alpert spoke of Mr. Epstein's knowledge of other systems and how that played a role in guiding Newton's negotiations:

When they see you have a knowledgeable pro on your side, the cable companies act differently. When you have someone who knows the score, knows what the best deals that have been arranged in the state and in the country, they know they're not going to fool him with, 'we never do this. We can't do that.'

Mr. Alpert referred to the Cable Advisory Committee visiting three other communities' access efforts and meeting with their Executive Directors so that the committee was "educating" itself.

Mr. Doar, when asked about a standard used to evaluate public access, was fairly strong in his statement that "needs are different from community to community." He was not aware that any standard had been used to evaluate access.

So in summary, Mr. Epstein's legal perspective, as well as visits to other access efforts, did provide some informal comparative models and Mr. Doar supervises on a regional basis so he also has some other access efforts to refer to when he makes judgements.

Current Issues

This question revealed little information for Newton. Mr. Alpert said he frankly "didn't know" how the time and money invested in public access could be used to better advantage. He added that he looked forward to the new entity starting to produce programs and hoped there would be a balanced assortment of different things. Mr. Doar said, "the value can't be measured in a monthly or annual return. In terms of raw dollars, it's more of meeting a need in the community."

Subscribers Funding Access

Mr. Alpert responded this way,

if they knew what it cost them I don't think they'd object. A certain amount is passed on to the subscriber, it isn't all passed on because Continental has to provide this service anyway. It isn't as though the two hundred and fifty thousand is added on to subscriber's fees each year. If it was up to those who don't know enough about it or aren't interested, they would say they don't want it. But it isn't something that they vote on. It's something that people in the community have decided on. The funds are available from Continental and they can't be used for anything else but to serve subscribers in this way.

Mr. Doar provided information which refutes part of what Mr. Alpert said. Prior to this specific question on how he thinks subscribers feel about funding public access, the question of how Continental's access efforts in Newton were funded had been asked. Mr. Doar had responded "...It is funded out of revenues provided by subscriber subscription." The researcher did not provide Mr. Alpert with this information as part of the research. One can not help but wonder if Mr. Alpert's response might have been different.

Mr. Doar responded this way to the question of how he thinks subscribers feel about funding public access, "that's an excellent question and I don't think we've asked it yet. If we say sixty percent view it, do they know they help pay for it?" Researcher: "Do you think they know?" Mr. Doar:

I really don't (pause) Let me take that back. They know there's a cost associated with the delivery of the product and whether that's E.S.P.N. or the local channel. In terms of what percentage of their bill goes to pay for it, I don't think they've given that a lot of thought. How do they feel? I'd like to think that the sixty percent that watch it feel its worthwhile. The folks that don't watch it would give you the same response if it was any other channel. 'I don't watch it. Why should I pay for it?' You're always going to have that perception.

Mr. Doar is stating, "I don't think we've asked.." for the Continental system but the research revealed in the literature review has likewise very rarely asked that question. Subscribers have not really been asked if they wish to have access and as reported, are probably only superficially aware that they are paying for this service.

It should be noted that in the printed material received the cable television renewal license there has some language which is included about making subscribers aware that Continental is funding the new non-profit access corporation. Specifically it states:

In its agreement with the Access Corporation, the City shall require that the Access Corporation include the following funding acknowledgment at the beginning and end of each access program: Major funding for this program has been provided by Continental Cablevision. Continental Cable is not responsible for the content of this program. If appropriate, the Access Corporation may place additional underwriting acknowledgments of this nature as well. In the event that the Licensee voluntarily places a separate line item on Subscriber's bills relating to the said four percent (4%) funding this Section 6.11 shall become null and void.

The amount of funding and how much that means to each subscriber's bill is information that subscribers will receive only if Continental chooses to put it on the bill.

Potential Evaluation

Mr. Doar comments on the possibilities of how public access could be evaluated centered on numbers:

Raw numbers, hours of programming, what type of categories, diversity, level of volunteer graduates, the number retained, the number of hours they put in after they've been trained, the money aspect. Having given subscribers the information on programming, training and volunteers involved ask the cable customers, "Do you, cable customer, feel it has been worth it to you?"

Mr. Alpert's answer was more exploratory. He said,

I don't know if I have the answer to that. We will in some way evaluate what they're trying to set up with the access effort. These are other local people running the access entity so I don't know. We will try to establish some guidelines but I don't know. There's not much to go on. We don't know what should be on there.

On the question of what criteria or standard could be used

Mr. Alpert's answer was "I don't know."

Mr. Doar said,

I would hesitate to see an across the board standard created. That could constrict or stifle the creative aspect of things. Every town is different. If you get into standards they're not going to give you the information you need. They

might in a broad sinse but they don't take into account the various mores of that community.

On the question of who should be the evaluator of public access efforts, Mr. Alpert feels that the community or any person can have input through the Newton Cable Advisory Committee and that this committee should be the evaluator of public access efforts, Mr. Alpert feels that the community or any person can have input through the Newton Cable Advisory Committee and that this committee should be the evaluator of public access efforts. Mr. Doar also felt the viewer should evaluate access efforts but through a survey tool. He said, "They should be told the data about public access, then have the viewership give their opinion based on that data." He was not clear exactly what data would be given but the researcher feels Mr. Doar was referring to the data he mentioned when answering how access efforts could be evaluated such as hours of programming, number of persons trained and how much time they've put in since training. It is not clear if he would be suggesting that subscribers be told exactly what price they have paid for public access. This researcher feels that without knowing cost, the subscriber might think they are getting the service free. It is a rare instance when people say something free is not worth it.

Welsh was not asked about the potential evaluation of access. Though her answers about what is success for an access effort are related to this subject.

Case #4 - Westerly, Rhode Island

Preface: Rhode Island is Different

Rhode Island does not relicense cable operators. Cable companies in R.I. are on the whole granted a "perpetual license" as explained by John Knotte the Assistant Administrator of Rhode Island's Public Utilities Commission (P.U.C.).

Rhode Island passed its general laws dealing with cable television in 1969 long before many other states did and under the general laws there are no provisions for any relicensing or renewal on a license. The first awards were made in August of 1974 and they did not delineate a term for the license... Additional certificates that we have issued for service areas have been by annexation: an existing company would annex an adjoining town and put in the television system. So it was an expansion and it tacks onto the original award that was made in 1974. We've really only had one new service area and that was awarded two years ago. The Administrator here said if everyone else is on a perpetual license, I can't see making any changes and I don't see any authorization for it. So it was not done.

As a result the use of renewal dates as a criterion needed to be dropped for Rhode Island with regard to this research effort.

Also, Rhode Island's P.U.C. awards licenses, the town government is not the issuing authority. The licenses are given to the company for service areas which may include several towns. Because records are kept for the service area as a whole, one town in the service area could not be singled out by those responding to the questions. Therefore, results are reported for the entire service area.

The state regulations created Citizens Advisory Committees for each service area. These Committees include members from the several towns encompassed in a service area. It was a member of this Committee that was interviewed for this research, since it is the Rhode Island form of the Cable Advisory Committee.

Public Access has been mandated in the state of R.I. since 1981, when the P.U.C. developed their regulations governing cable television systems. Those regulations contain clear language that requires access channels, access equipment, access staff and user training. Since this has been required of all systems in R.I., the only service area that would not be able to meet my second criteria of having had public access television since 1988, would have been the Newport service area which was only awarded two years ago.

Since recently renewed franchises could not be used as a starting place of which community study, Mr. Knotte was asked to suggest a "typical" system that the researcher might study in R.I. The Westerly system was suggested as meeting that description and was used.

Since RI is uniquely different in not having contracts expire it is worth noting some of the advantages and disadvantages of this system as Mr. Knotte described them. This will provide a better concept of the context in which the Westerly, R.I. system functions. The advantages the R.I. system has, as Mr. Knotte sees it, is constant watching of the cable industry instead of looking at it only every ten years, as in the case a license renewal. Also he sees centralized authority as a big plus for the state and the industry. Mr. Knotte said,

You have a centralized office and cable companies know they are going to get uniform rulings and responses. It's a lot easier to have a uniform rule than have it vary from town to town. Since I am it (as far as the state office), I deal with these general managers, Public Access coordinators, technicians and engineers on a daily basis... They know they are going to have to deal with me and they can't play games with me... A lot of these other state agencies have very little contact with cable companies. They deal with it only when the local town or city has become exasperated or they don't have the ability to handle a problem and then the town goes to look for help from the state office. I deal with that everyday. I keep them a lot more on their toes and we have the rates to prove it. Our rates are well under the national average per channel, per month.

When asked if he thought the Rhode Island perpetual licensing system had any disadvantages Mr. Knotte responded,

You lose some of that clout. But remember that clout is only exercised to any great degree of intensity every ten or fifteen years. I get a shot at them everyday.

Using Mr. Knotte's own words, "It's a very unique situation." It should also be pointed out that Mr. Knotte reported that, Rhode Island's regulations on public access are "probably the most stringent regulations on public access in the country." The number of channels and the specific levels of equipment and staff are spelled out in these regulations. It should also be mentioned that there is a waiver process regarding these mandatory access rules.

Mr. Knotte suggested that the Westerly service area be used for the research because it was a "typical" Rhode Island system. As a result, interviews were conducted with Frank McMahon, Program Director, Westerly Cable Television and Tom Chinigo. He as a member of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Westerly service area.

The Westerly cable system encompasses several towns including Charlestown, Hokinton, Richmond, and Westerly. The respondents characterized the area as small town and rural. The area's population density is projected to be 626 per square mile, according to a Chamber of Commerce

publication. The population goes up in the summer months for the area includes seven miles of sandy beaches. A respondent noted that the community had a large Italian and some Irish ethnic mix. The 45 channel cable is owned and operated by Colony Cable and had approximately 14,000 subscribers when the research was done according to a cable company employee.

Structure

Much of the structure of access in Rhode Island is outlined in P.U.C. regulations. It states the quantity and types of facilities, equipment and staff that are mandated. Of course, the cable system can go beyond these minimums. It is also important to note that the Service Area Citizens Advisory Committee in Westerly feels that it can request more of the operator if there is a need. The language of the regulations states, for example, "Each CATV system operator shall provide portable equipment of a type and in quantities adequate to satisfy the program production needs of the users..." [Rules Governing Community Antenna Television Systems, Jan. 30, 1981 revised Jan. 14, 1983. p.49]. There is similar language for increasing access channels and staffing. Tom Chinigo stated,

The Advisory Committee monitors the situation. If we have a large number of access users who can't get access to the equipment because there are other people already signed up, then the operator would be advised that they need to purchase additional equipment. So we have the authority to have them add channels, equipment or staffing.

One drawback pointed out by Mr. Chinigo, of having equipment stated in regulations is that the list goes out of date, "the equipment requirements list has not been updated since 1981, and there are 4 items in there that are obsolete."

The regulations outline seven channels for local programming and one more for every additional five channels in a system with more than 35 channels. Mandated are separate channels for Public Access, educational access and governmental access. Westerly does not have this number of local programming channels. Tom Chinigo explains this situation:

We have a waiver procedure built in here where you can start with one local channel for combined uses. That's what we have here. Then once you pass forty hours a week of programming, the Advisory Committee has the authority to order the company to activate another access channel.

In fact, in Westerly, not only is public, governmental and educational access on the same channel, local origination is also on that channel. "There's 24 hours in a day so there's plenty of time for both (access and L.O.) on one channel," reported Mr. McMahon. This comment led to a question of whether people knew the difference between the

L.O. and access programming. Mr. McMahon responded "I can tell the difference and probably you could tell the difference but most people probably don't know the difference." This is confirmed by Mr. Chinigo in this statement:

Here we combine P.E.G. access and L.O. Generally, its local programming. One problem we have, because it's all on one channel, is the public doesn't know who produced the programming. All they know is it was on Channel 13.

Additionally, the research revealed that programming that was not considered access or L.O. by the Program Director, was on the local programming channel for two hours every evening. When speaking of a survey that was done last year, Mr. McMahon said, "A lot of people watch the Italian Network feed that we get from the satellite from 6 to 8 p.m. each night." When it was asked if he considered that access programming or local origination, his response was, "Neither, it's just a satellite feed."

This and one other instance in Connecticut was the only time in the research that reference was made to using satellite feeds to put on the local programming channel. As such some details were pursued as to its nature and how it came to be on the local channel. Mr. McMahon reported that the two hour daily program is picked up from the satellite free of charge to the cable operator. There are commercials in the programming and Mr. McMahon conjectured

that the commercials pay the bills that make the programming possible. The program is in Italian and was put on after the cable operator received a petition from the community requesting it be carried.

It is interesting to note that in the "Agreement" that an access user is asked to sign when submitting a tape for cablecast, item #5 of that assessment states "Applicant agrees that no advertising material is to be cablecast except on a leased channel." This is similar to many access user rules. There really is not an applicant in the Italian network. The feed does not come into the system via a cassette tape but through a satellite feed. Nor does any user bring in a tape. Clearly, if a person carried a tape into the system and asked that it be played with its commercials, it would be against the rules. The P.U.C. rules do allow for using the channel for other purposes as long as that time is not needed for access purposes. The point is that satellite programming requested by members of the community may be an area that will grow in the future. The rules for deciding to carry them on the access channel should be made explicit. Where the community gathered signatures and got programming carried on cable that they wanted to see, and that serves their needs, is a positive occurrence. Yet concern must be voiced over the possibility of many more such requests where the programming shown is "for profit" programming and may lead

away from the original freedom of speech opportunity that begat access.

As stated before much of the structure of access efforts in Rhode Island are dictated by P.U.C. regulations. Expanding on this, Tom Chinigo explained that the possibility of having non-profit corporations run access may not exist. He said, "In Rhode Island, the cable operator is required to run the access facilities himself." Mr. Chinigo did mention in the course of the interview that there are people who are thinking differently. He reported,

That's a big debate. We have a handful of individuals in our state who want to go that route: with the creation of the non-profit corporation to run access. Those people created a little non-profit organization and they got grant money from people and every time they get the money together, they throw a cocktail party at the State House and blow it... All you are doing is delegating the authority to someone else.... There's no guarantee that they are going to do a better job than the cable operator themselves.

Expanding further on how the regulations have affected the existence and structure of access, Mr. McMahon states that,

With our company the feeling is, they have to do it (access). It's a public utilities requirement but if they're going to do it, they're going to go all the way. They're going to get the best...

Yet he also said that local programming worked well as a marketing tool when competing for new franchises. He said,

When we tried to move into a town through expansion a big focus became what were we doing with access... and the competing cable companies started offering more public access.

So it is a combination of regulations and marketing needs that seem to sustain access.

Rhode Island P.U.C. regulations require a minimum of one full time staff person for access, two portable systems, one editing system, one studio and training for the public. Westerly cable maintains this level of equipment for access but they have three staff members who work on both access and local origination programming. The Program Director, Mr. McMahon, felt that seventy-five percent of staff time is devoted to access. Mr. McMahon commented "We're really two departments combined: Access and L.O." There are no local origination requirements in the state regulations. The staff reports to the General Manager. The company funds all access efforts and they are housed in the business office of Westerly Cable Company. There was no information made available on the amount of the budget for access. Mr. McMahon said, "I can't say." This was business information that he did not wish to disclose. While Mr. Chinigo said he did not know but that the P.U.C. might know.

Definition

Tom Chinigo defines public access this way:

It's the public's forum. It's a soap box; the public's ability to use the medium for whatever purpose they so desire to express their views to the viewing audience. It is quite comparable to a letter to the editor in a newspaper. The major difference is the cable operator has no control over content, where as the local newspaper does not have to publish a letter if it does not choose to.

Frank McMahon's definition of access was more production skills oriented.

I would say simply it is giving the public access to that channel. We use whatever means to have it fully utilized. In other words, if they come in off the street and they don't know how to run a camera or an editor or anything, it is our job to train them so they can produce a professional or at least semi-professional production.

Goals

Even though Mr. McMahon used a goal of "fully utilized" in his definition of public access when asked what the goals were he said,

There really isn't any goals and that's probably been a problem with public access. In a way, it's kind of new even though it has been around for years. It's still hasn't really been tapped as far as the potential. It's basically, we have a cable channel that the public can have access to and we give them the means to get on to the channel by producing or directing or editing or dropping off tapes. If we had to state goals, I guess they would be to do that on a weekly basis, to make sure people have an opportunity to use the channel. Our goal is not to train as many people

as possible but to work with people we have and really make sure they know what they're doing and their productions are pretty polished looking rather than just trying to just run as many people as possible through the access course. Public relations is the goal of our department.

Tom Chinigo emphasized outreach in his response.

The goals of public access are simply to make television production equipment, staffing and training and channels available to the public to use as they so desire. Beyond being available the Citizen's Advisory Committee has set some goals, it has an educational role. To make it as available to all the residents you have to go out and advise the public to what their rights and responsibilities are because if they don't know that an opportunity exists they can't take advantage of it. So promote it and educate the public.

Both responses were very access user oriented as opposed to audience focused. This user orientation continued with responses to how they would define success for public access.

Success

Numbers of users is clearly a criterion for success for both respondents. Frank McMahon also articulates success for public access in terms of production skills gained by the access user.

Taking a regular person off the street and turning them into a television producer who creates programming six months later. The main goal is to give people an outlet to express themselves. If there's no people, it is dead. When we have people coming in, that's more successful.

When asked how many people is enough, he stated,

Once we train them, the ball is in their court. We've showed them how to do it and we've encouraged them, we've told them what's involved. The majority of access people we train we don't usually see again. Maybe one or two people from an access course will stick with it and go the distance...

Tom Chinigo focused even more specifically on a large number of users equating success for public access.

Making a list of civic groups, school and other organizations in the community and then matching the programming list to see what percentage of these groups are actually doing programming. When you see that you have a large number then you are successful.

When probed for what was a "large number" he said, "each year it should increase" but what percentage of increase is enough "is not yet determined." Mr. Chinigo also said, "Treating equally all users" was another goal and this would signify success when attained.

Audience response to public access was not mentioned by either respondent when they spoke of success for public access. It was mentioned in Mr. Chinigo's definition of access but not in response to the questions about goals or success.

Related to the question of how to define success is the question of whether or not public access has made an impact on the community. Mr. Chinigo started off his

response by saying he felt the televising of town council meetings had a dramatic effect on referendums and had contributed to a more informed and involved public when it came to local politics. He was amazed by the number of calls received when the local channel did a call in show. He also mentioned that he gets complaints about some of the rock music shows that are done by access producers. He explains to these callers about the freedom of speech aspect of public access. The two shows mentioned previously, town council meetings and the call in show, are examples of local origination and are not access products because they are produced by staff. Mr. Chinigo then explained how he feels that the company is doing too much local origination programming versus public access programming and how this can be a problem. The discussion of this articulated problem will be covered more in the current issues section. Whereas Mr. Chinigo's focus for defining success is on users, it's affect on the community is more audience related. Mr. McMahon's response to the effect public access had on the community remained targeted at access users. He said, "People get more involved with cable instead of being very passive. If they don't like what's on currently, they can produce their own show."

Evaluation

When asked about any evaluation of access efforts, Mr. McMahon reported that

The only ones were requested by the P.U.C. once a year, basically asking what programs were produced as far as access and what L.O. programs were produced. We group them into L.O. and access and how many people we trained for the year and they want the names and addresses of people who have been trained in the last twelve months and that's the extent of it. That's pretty much it. I don't know if that's really an evaluation or just a record. There's no real evaluation that I can see. The only time we were evaluated was when we were trying to move into a neighboring town. This section that was near us decided they wanted cable and we went up against a couple other companies. A big primary focus was public access. What is Westerly Cable doing with public access? How many people have they trained? What has the response been? The cable systems would push saying, We can get you more public access staff. For example, building a second studio was offered.

When asked if the company does any evaluation, McMahon said, "There's no income from public access, it's just a lot of money spent with some public relations effect..." He said most cable companies provide access because it is a P.U.C. requirement and did not go into any evaluations done by the company in response to that question.

Later in the interview when discussing the possibility of how access could be evaluated in the future, Mr. McMahon explained that the company has done a yearly phone survey focusing on public access and local origination. Since that information has more to do with past evaluations, it appears in this section of the report. The section of the

survey dealing with access and L.O., lists the six most regularly run shows, usually three access shows and three local origination shows and asks subscribers if they've seen the shows. Mr. McMahon explained that the survey: "Lets us know if people are watching." They found out that most popular are the town council meetings and the Italian Network. The Italian Network is interesting since it appeared in the section of the survey that dealt with access and L.O. but Frank does not consider it L.O. or access programming. He continues to explain how they might use the results of such a survey by saying, "If they're not watching the L.O. shows we're doing then maybe we shouldn't do it. Maybe we should focus on something else." But the use of the survey information is different in Frank's way of thinking as it pertains to the feedback on access programs. He says,

As far as access, we can tell the producer what percentage of people are watching the show. It may boost their morale. I don't think we'll use the information like the networks but it's nice to have a little feedback of whose watching it. If I found out that hardly anyone was watching an access show, I probably would not pass that on to the access producer because it's hard enough to produce an access show but to then find out that no one is watching... All that hard work and no one is watching it.

Mr. Chinigo relayed to me information about an evaluation effort undertaken as part of the Cable Television Advisory Council. This group works on a statewide level to give input to the P.U.C. on what is

happening throughout the state. It is made up of 19 members which include, among others, people recommended by the local service area Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Mr.Chinigo responded about evaluation by saying,

Yes, that was done on a statewide basis a few years ago as a result of the cable industry coming to the P.U.C. and they said they had trained so many thousand people in Rhode Island and ninety-five percent of the people never come back. So the chairman of the Advisory Council appointed a three member sub-committee that I chaired. We sent out surveys to the cable operators. The initial set of surveys they responded to but subsequent ones they ignored. We issued an interim report that ultimately became our final report. What we decided to do in that report, was to scrutinize the access classes and make sure they were run properly. We suggested particular written materials be used. We made some recommendations on how to structure the actual classes. We suggested pooling of access producer talent and an access users club with a newsletter. We also recommended more outreach. Most importantly, we said we need to make sure they are properly informed initially. They need to be talked to before they sign up for the classes. The biggest problem we found out was people who signed up for classes really had no idea how much effort it takes to do a television production. Then they'd start taking the class and would realize there's a lot of work involved and they would stop because they didn't have the time. You have to find a way to make them aware of the time and effort that is needed before the training and that will improve your success rate; that is people who come back and use the equipment and produce after the training. Now, since we started to tell them how much is involved we have seen improvement statewide.

When asked if that improvement was documented as to how much improvement, he said there was none.

Mr. Chinigo also spoke of a state representative who was having hearings around the state in preparation for a bill he wanted to introduce which would do away with the Citizen's Advisory Committee, claiming they were ineffective. Because much of what the Citizens Advisory Committee's deals with is access, the information related to evaluating the Citizen's Advisory Committee is pertinent to this research. Mr. Chinigo told me,

In some service areas, the Citizen's Advisory Committee exists in name only. All they dealt with was access and once it was established, they disappeared. We are the most active Advisory Committee in the state and we use a hands on approach. We go in there a couple of times a week regarding some aspect of cable. If you don't set foot in the building you are not going to know what's going on with access. The problem with these Citizen's Advisory Committees is they are made up of public members, representatives from each town government and municipal school systems. What happened is the terms were staggered and the division sent letters to the local town councils to appoint someone and they never responded. That is one of the problems you run into. Also, people that join and attend a couple of meetings to figure out what it is all about and they determine that they are not interested or they lost interest. We've had some hearings over the past few years, we have one state representative who was trying to get a bill passed creating a study commission... He wanted to introduce a bill that would do away with the Citizen's Advisory Committee. I went to every hearing he had around this state and when I got done testifying he changed his mind and he did not introduce that legislation... I do think we need to cut down the size of the Citizen's Advisory Committee and relax the rules to make sure you get people in there who are truly interested in performing the service that they're suppose to.

Another activity related to the evaluation of access that was articulated in both Mr. McMahon's and Mr. Chinigo's interview was the "P.U.C. Awards." This is a statewide judged competition sponsored by the P.U.C. that focuses on programming from both local origination and public access. Mr. McMahon explains its purpose this way: "It boosts access and L.O. and promotes higher standards. People see what others have done and it could motivate them to do as well or better." Mr. Chinigo voiced a similar sentiment,

..to promote access we have a statewide competition annually. We are the only place in the country to air that awards show live. This is the third year to do that.

Several reported evaluation efforts pertaining to access were revealed in the Rhode Island case: company audience surveys, the Advisory Committee scrutinizing the training of producers, statewide hearings on the continuation of the Citizen's Advisory Committees structure and programming competitions.

Changes

Because Rhode Island does not have renewals of licenses, the question concerning changes requested had to be worded to reflect that situation.

Basically, what was explored was how change occurs in the current system. The Citizen's Advisory Committees were created by the P.U.C. and the P.U.C. cable regulations give that committee clear authority for input to the manager of the cable system on a number of aspects of access. This combination seems to be capable of identifying and encouraging changes that are deemed necessary. There are a number of examples that can be cited from the interview where change, initiated by needs identified by the Citizen's Advisory Committee in Westerly, were acted upon.

One example is the hours of operation. Mr. Chinigo explains the problem and its resolution this way:

Frank McMahon came from the sister company in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. What they did there was run local access programs during the day and they reserved the evening for governmental meetings. They were televising them all, from school committee to finance to planning. They had production assistants who went to city hall and did the meetings every night. So when he came here he wanted that same nine to five job and wanted to run access only during the day and I said evenings are important. At the present time, we have programming on in the evening which is when people are home. Currently, the staff comes in at noon and access is open noon till 9 p.m.

Another example of input that has caused change is with the studio size. Because Mr. Chinigo visits the access operation about two times per week he is able to see for himself some of the problems.

One problem we have here is a studio that's too small. It's only twenty feet wide and cameras are backed up against the wall. On the other side of the studio walls is rental space that they haven't been able to rent for two years. So I've asked that they plan on knocking that wall out and double the size of the studio and I was told that it would happen in two years.

A good working relationship between the Citizens's Advisory Committee and the cable system management was reported by Mr. Chinigo.

We are fortunate... to have a good working relationship where we set priorities of what to tackle next. We meet with the manager and make a list. We've done that for years.

But vigilance is a critical component in the relationship. One example of this aspect is reflected in this comment by Mr. Chinigo when he was discussing the scheduling of access shows and the need for an involved hands on staff for access:

It's taken three years to get them to respond, to do what we want them to do... If you don't watch them they'll start doing their own little direction again.

He told me of decisions that were made on the choice of radio station that goes with the bulletin board and how he finds they change that back to a rock and roll station even after a discussion on how the chosen music should be more middle of the road. Another instance of vigilance being needed is for handouts in the training classes. Handouts were recommended for the training of producers but since the acquisition of chip cameras from tube cameras occurred,

there has been no camera handout because the handout has not been developed according to Mr. Chinigo.

So changes requested by the public through the representation of the Citizen's Advisory Committee is sometimes slow but is characterized in this case situation by openness on the part of management to move in recommended directions.

Standard

The responses to the question as to whether any set standard is used to compare their public access efforts to elicited from Mr. McMahon information on the statewide competition that was discussed under the evaluation section and Mr. Chinigo referred to the Advisory Council's sub-committee which studied aspects of public access producer training and subsequent retention. Both situations have some comparisons being made on a statewide basis but neither had articulated in a verbal or quantitative form any "standard" that could be used by others.

Current Issues

The questions whose purpose it was to reveal current issues produced several interesting responses from the interviewees. Mr. McMahon focused on increasing staff so as to cover more local governmental functions. He said,

We could increase the staff. We pretty much have the minimum work force so if access gets busy, L.O. suffers. People ask us to come film a town council meeting and we're pretty much obligated to do that. When it comes to some weeks we're not here. One part-timer is working and she's trying to do playback and help an access person edit and meanwhile, there's an access studio production going on. Sometimes we are spread too thin.

When the staff covers a governmental meeting that programming is considered local origination programming because it is done by staff and the company can decide whether or not it is going to provide staff for covering the meeting. Mr. McMahon's response is really asking for more staff to do local origination, not more access. His response does reveal access needs as having priority over local origination by saying, "L.O. suffers" he does not turn that around and ever say that access suffers. Although it was not part of Mr. Chinigo's response to this question, during the course of his interview, he provided a completely different perspective on what Mr. McMahon said. But Mr. Chinigo's thoughts are diametrically opposed to doing more local origination. Mr. Chinigo said,

This company does too much local origination. They do weekly town council and community events

and things going on in the school. What has happened now is that other town officials want other meetings televised. They are too lazy to take the access training class and do it themselves. That's a problem. This company does more local origination programming than all the other cable systems combined. Some of the systems like Dimension in Providence don't do any local origination programming. If the community wants it done, they have to take the equipment and do it themselves. That's a major problem we are running into because now, with the company covering the Westerly Town Council meetings, the other three towns want their meetings televised. We've explained to him what governmental access is and how it works. If they want to pay town employees or have volunteers, they can take the access course, take the equipment and do what they want.

From a different part of the interview, Mr. Chinigo provides historical perspective of this L.O. activity:

The former Chairman of the P.U.C. used to call it guided access, where you get the cable company to go out and produce a program and get it on the air; like a council meeting. That in turn will trigger some other groups and theoretically they will sign up for the class and do their own. You give them some examples of what can be done with it and others will follow. I think we're experiencing the down side of the concept here. When you have the company doing things to give an idea of what can be done, it can snowball another way. People here are wanting the company to do everything and the company can't do everything. They'd need a lot more staffing. That's the dilemma we have here.

It is interesting to note the Rika Welsh at one point in her interview had said that it is important to treat everyone the same so that the community does not see the access effort as political. If they were to follow her advice, the Westerly system could either do everything for everyone or have staff cover no meetings.

Tom Chinigo's response to the question of current issues revealed that he sees access in Westerly headed toward a new stage in its development. He said,

As far as this system is concerned, we need a shift in priorities now. We have the equipment and the facilities. We don't need to make any dramatic changes regarding equipment. Now I think those dollars should be shifted over somewhat to outreach programs as well as getting the educational institutions tied in.

This is not the only time that outreach was discussed during the course of his interview, at another point in the responses to my questions, he said,

They don't do any outreach at all. This is unfortunate. I go out and talk to groups about access. They've never done that since they've been here. When I suggest to the company where there should be a courtesy drop, the cable company sends out a letter to those places and explains about L.O. and access but that's it.

As evidenced here, there may be some tension as to whether L.O. or access should be developed more. Mr. Chinigo seems to be calling for more to be done by access producers volunteering their time or by town employees. Mr. McMahon, on the other hand, is calling for more staff so that L.O. won't "suffer" when access gets busy.

Subscribers Funding Access

Both Mr. McMahon and Mr. Chinigo gave similar answers to the question asking how they think the cable subscribers feel about funding public access. Mr. McMahon said,

I don't think they know they fund it. I don't think they put the two together. They may complain about the cable rates in general, you know, that they're having increases but I don't think people realize that they are directly funding access.

He did not really say how he thinks they would feel if they did know they were paying for it.

Mr. Chinigo's response was similar with the exception that he did address how people might feel if they did know how much they were paying for public access cable television. Mr. Chinigo told me,

I don't believe any of the cable subscribers realize the cable bill goes to funding access. Some systems in areas where the requirements (for access) have been excessive have been itemizing on the cable bill what percentage of the monthly bill goes to access and that shows subscribers that two dollars a month goes to access or whatever. Now in those situations, obviously the public becomes aware of how much is going for access and they can determine for themselves whether it is worth it or not. Here most people don't even realize that we have the local television studio and they've never thought about who is paying for this. So it doesn't even enter their mind.

When probed as to how they might feel if they did know, he said,

If the figure was two dollars per month then they'd probably scream but I don't believe that is the figure. Since I don't know what they are spending on access, I can't say. If it was a dollar a month, I don't think anyone would complain but if it gets up into the two to three dollars range, then I think they would.

Both interviewees did not think cable subscribers were aware that they were funding access. No dollar figure for the budget was obtained since Mr. McMahon declined to answer that question and Mr. Chinigo did not know the access budget. Since this information is unavailable, Mr. Chinigo's comments on the subscriber's probable willingness to pay one dollar a month for public access remains inconclusive since we don't know how much they are paying. But in other communities (see Table 3) if known budgets are evenly divided among the subscribers, per month charges range from \$6.48 to \$53.15 per subscriber, per year.

Potential Directions for Evaluating Public Access

Both interviewees had some specific concepts of how they would evaluate public access efforts but when it came to setting some specific numbers of what is acceptable and what was unacceptable, they felt that specifics were not called for, that simply getting the data and gradually improving upon results was enough.

Mr. McMahon's suggestions focused on access users. They would determine whether access efforts were successful. He said,

As far as evaluating public access, and the performance of the company, my idea is to do a statewide survey of all the access people. Send a survey out to every access producer and they can judge how much help they've gotten and how successful they've been in producing a show. Have members send the survey to the P.U.C. directly. Maybe the P.U.C. should initiate this survey. Were they happy? Were they able to produce? That would show which cable systems are putting more effort into their public access groups. Another idea, would be that the amount of equipment be related to the number of subscribers. For instance, we have two cameras and so on to meet the P.U.C. requirements and we have fourteen thousand subscribers. What about the system that has sixty thousand subscribers? They only have two cameras... so it should be more of a ratio guideline. For instance, one camera for every eight thousand subscribers... Because I know at Vision, our other system, they have about forty thousand subscribers and they are always booked for access and access members I talk to say, Oh! I can never get a camera in that place. In fact, the system had to give people blocks of four hours for editing... They have quite a log jam there. I think the only way to alleviate it is some kind of rewriting of the regulation to gauge the amount of equipment based on the number of subscribers.

The last part of Mr. McMahon's comment is interesting in that according to Mr. Chinigo's interpretation of existing regulations, the Citizen's Advisory Committees can recommend that the company supply additional equipment. This observation regarding the Visions system may actually be verification that some of the Citizen's Advisory Committee are not fully functioning or that their requests go unheeded.

Mr. McMahon did not mention subscribers as part of the picture for evaluating access until the researcher brought it up. He then talked about the annual telephone survey

that his company does but he did not indicate that subscriber satisfaction with programming was a critical factor. The only criterion that Mr. McMahon suggests using is the satisfaction of access members. He was not clear as to how much satisfaction is enough.

Mr. Chinigo focused on two things: the results of access producer efforts as a way to evaluate and using a list of things to be done as an action plan for improvement. He said,

The corporate office each year requests from the local Program Director the list of access programs produced that year and I'm sure they look at the dollars they spend and how many users they have; that type of thing. That's one way of evaluating it: how much is spent, how many are using it and how much is getting on the air. I think that is the way you evaluate access.

When asked what criteria could be used to evaluate public access he replied,

You would have to take a look at what work has been done regarding outreach, not necessarily the money but what are the results. What method is used to promote access programming. How do you promote your access training classes? You touch all bases and you do some L.O. stuff to show the audience what can be done. You make a list of what should be done and once you accomplish what is on your list you should have success. (Previously Mr. Chinigo had defined success for public access as large numbers of of public access users. If you don't have success you have to go back and re-evaluate and find out what is wrong. You could have a bad Access Coordinator with an attitude problem or not teaching the training properly or is not cooperative. I've heard horror stories where the cable company does everything in their power to have the access user become disgruntled. They will tell them th equipment is broken and so they can't go out and do their

planned shoots that they've planned for a month. They'll put obstacles up for the user so that the user will definitely fail. This would keep costs down. You don't have to buy new equipment if the equipment you have is never used. You don't have to buy additional equipment or support staff because nothing is happening. That's why I have to keep an eye on things because these are the stories you hear with the system that we have here in Rhode Island.

Mr. Chinigo feels that an active Citizen's Advisory Committee in conjunction with the P.U.C. should be the evaluator of public access efforts. Mr. Chinigo suggested that if you wanted to know if your programming would be missed, you could do what the cable operators did in the "old days." He said,

The cable operator would deliberately pull the plug on the channel for a couple of hours and see how many people would notice. That would determine whether you should keep that channel and it works too. It's a good loop and gives a good indication of the amount of people watching.

He did not suggest that this would be used for access but that it would work as a feedback tool if you were interested in the numbers of people watching.

Both interviewees centered on the access user as a way to evaluate public access. Mr. McMahon's focus was the satisfaction of the access user while Mr. Chinigo's concentration was more on results as in productions completed and the numbers of active producers.

Case #5 - Greater Hartford Connecticut

Preface: Greater Hartford, Connecticut

Cox Cable serves the Greater Hartford area of Connecticut. The system franchise passes about 75,000 homes of which, about 54,000 subscribe to the 40 channel cable service that is offered. The service area does not include the city of Hartford. It was characterized by a respondent as being suburban and upscale with no great minority population.

Three interviews were conducted for the Connecticut system. The methodology was followed and then added to because the situation warranted. Upon conducting an interview with Dan McNamara, who runs access for the Cox Cable System in the Greater Hartford area, he referred me to Andy Vincens as the person to interview for the public committee representative. Mr. Vincens is the Chair of the Cox Advisory Council. When the interview with Mr. Vincens was conducted, the interviewee expressed strong feelings, that to include only his experience with public access in his town of Manchester was to misrepresent what was happening with public access in this service area. He said that Manchester had developed access "the least" and he felt that as a balance an interview with a more active access town was in order. He suggested that Newington's

access efforts should be included. He recommended speaking with Ed Pizzella. The suggestion was followed through and Mr. Pizzella's interview responses are included. As it happened while that interview was being conducted, Mr. Everett Weaver arrived at Mr. Pizzella's office. Mr. Weaver is very involved with public access television in the town of Newington. Mr. Pizzella referred some questions to Mr. Weaver. This would more likely happen when Mr. Weaver had first hand knowledge of occurrences and Mr. Pizzella had no direct contact with it.

Connecticut licenses cable television operators through the Department of Public Utilities Commission, D.P.U.C. They have divided the state into service areas which usually consist of a city and several towns. They do have license expiration dates and, therefore, a renewal process. The D.P.U.C. is the decision making authority on the renewal of a license and they receive input from various sources as part of their decision making process. The D.P.U.C. holds public hearings that feed into the decision making process. The office of Consumer Council often gets involved to see that the statutes are followed which apply to cable. Each service area has a Cable Advisory Council which has representatives from each town. Members consist of a Board of Education member appointed by the superintendent and other members appointed by the highest vote getter in town council. The Advisory

Council's function is to "give advice to the management of the cable company upon such matters affecting the public as it deems necessary." [Conneticut Dept. of P.U.C. statute 701.1 section 16-333-29 page 5] They also file an annual report of activities with the D.P.U.C. In the Greater Hartford system the council has 25 members.

Community access support has been part of the statutes governing cable in Connecticut since July 2, 1987. These include parameters for levels of staff and equipment based on the number of subscribers. The D.P.U.C. at each license renewal indicates a range of funding for access. The cable company is expected to spend that money and report to D.P.U.C. on how it was spent.

Definitions and Structure

Access activity does not seem to be centralized in this service area. The Connecticut River divides the service area into two sections, with three towns east of the river and three towns to the west. The main office of Cox Cable in the service area, the Cox studio and Cox staff for public access are located east of the river in Manchester. Both Mr. Pizzella and Mr. Vincens reported that the three towns west of the river have developed public access efforts in each of the towns while the towns

east of the river seem to depend more on the Cox Manchester headquarters. For this study, one town east and one town west of the river will be discussed.

Access activity in Manchester, which is east of the river, is headquartered in the Cox office, and equipment is borrowed from that location. Cox staff put on tapes for cable casting from that office and training classes are offered by Cox staff at the Manchester studio location. There is no organized group outside of the Cox office doing public access in Manchester. There are about 10 volunteers who do borrow the equipment and put the town council meetings on the cable system and from time to time, there is some special programming. Mr. Vincens reported that there was no organized group nor was there any regular programming other than town council. He did report that a group of high school students do a newscast from time to time. He said they do that with help from a paid teacher and they use school equipment. When asked whether he considered that public access or educational access, he explained to me that in Manchester they are not really separated into categories. There is access in Manchester but it is not divided into public, governmental and educational access. Volunteers cover the city council so is that governmental or public access? All of the programming is done by about 10 volunteers. All the programs are shown on the same channel so separating the

programming is really more of a programming category than a determination of who is running the access effort. It comes closest to the truth to say that in Manchester, the cable company runs access. When asked what the budget was for public access in Manchester, Mr. Vincens said, "There is none. What we do is done with existing equipment."

Newington is the town west of the river that was studied. The center of activity for access there is a non-profit organization formed in 1985, called Newington Community Television. It is run by a fifteen member Board of Directors. The office space and the utilities for Newington Community Television is made available free of charge from Newington town government. They are located in a town owned building. The roughly three thousand dollar operating budget for the organization is supplied through contributions and donations. Newington Community Television operates "entirely based on volunteers," Mr. Pizzella explained. There are about 45 volunteers at this point in time. The equipment used by Newington Community Television (N.C.T.) comes from a variety of sources. The town has purchased some equipment which is available to N.C.T. but is not owned by N.C.T. There is some Cox Cable equipment on permanent loan at Newington Community Television and they borrow Cox Cable equipment from a Weathersfield office. In addition, some members own their own equipment and often use that. The only items that the

budget needs to pay for are telephone, tapes and minor wiring.

Mr. McNamara is the Program Service Manager for Cox Cable. He defines public access this way:

I personally would define it as a cable channel and all the support systems that make programming a reality that is available to all the members of the community serviced by that cable system. The purpose is to offer an alternate form of expression, something different than what the networks are offering. It is a way of communicating to the local community, a way of getting viewpoints out. It is a non-profit, non-commercial channel that is more interested in bettering the community than making money.

Mr. Vincens, one of Manchester's representatives to the Cox Advisory Council, defined public access this way:

There are three parts of public access, government, education and public access. I would say that Manchester really doesn't have anything where the public is doing anything. It is mostly student volunteers doing governmental, that is, we do the City Council and they have a high school news show and some basketball games.

He went on to tell me about educational access activities. Even though Mr. Vincens did not seem to feel that there was public access using the working definition of this research paper, since volunteers are covering town council these programs are public access. If the town government was producing the show it would be classified as governmental access.

Mr. Pizzella offered his definition of public access:

We put on programming that you'd never see on network television. We put on local events and local happenings in more detail than other stations would ever put on T.V. We've had arguments sometimes justifying the money that goes into public access and my argument has always been that public access puts on the air that which commercial channels can not because they are commercial. We put on the Memorial Day parade and town council.

Goals

When responding to the question on what the goals are of public access in their community, Mr. McNamara and Mr. Pizzella's response were oriented toward increasing activity while Mr. Vincens' was to get public access organized and off the ground in Manchester as a separate organization.

Mr. Vincens said,

Honestly my goal is to develop a cadre of interested people who could start on programming beyond the council meetings and the educational staff I mentioned. Occasionally, some important governmental person like the governor will speak and the League of Women Voters will tape it and air it. But that is not regular, it is a one shot deal. I want to advertise that there is some seed money available. Also, I'd like to see each town have its own channel.

He explained how three towns on the east share one channel and three towns on the west of the river share another channel.

Mr. McNamara said,

The goals in our case is to get more diverse views on local issues to be expressed through our facilities and our channel. We want more people to come out and get trained to use our facility to express their point of view whether it's different or not but for them to speak up. We also want them to realize we are a resource that is different than other forms of media.

There are formally stated goals that Cox Cable files in its annual report to the D.P.U.C. When asked what those were this year, Mr. McNamara said they were to increase usage of access and to make it available. When asked if there were specific targets he said, "There are no numbers mentioned."

Mr. Pizzella spoke of the goals of Newington Community Television this way: "We want more effective use of the channel and air time. Specifically, we want to increase our air time and our quality." Upon probing for specifics, Mr. Pizzella said as far as what's enough air time, "When we get to 24 hours a day, that's enough," and as far as quality he said you are "never done" in that area. There are formally stated goals set down by the Board of Directors of Newington Community Television which have evolved over the life of the non-profit organization. These goals developed through the involvement in producing that the members of the board are occupied with. It was explained that the overall goal is to improve communications within the town of Newington. Mr. Weaver added,

By using public access more people can watch, see what's going on and maybe get involved with the town and hopefully, we'll also have a public affairs program in the near future.

Success

There is a wide difference in opinion between Mr. Pizzella and Mr. McNamara on what constitutes success for public access. Mr. McNamara said,

Personally high viewership on the channel. We haven't done a survey on it, I think we are getting more viewership but we are not getting enough bang for our buck.

He also sees "better communications in a community" as a measure of success but was quick to add that this is difficult to quantify. In sharp contrast to Mr. McNamara, Mr. Pizzella had a very difficult time defining what success was but was adamant that "You can't go on viewership percentage." He continued his discussion of success by saying,

I think that public access is bringing to people things they can not see otherwise. If you do that you are successful. We feel we are getting more viewership because we receive more and more comments and calls and encouragement from town government officials.

Mr. Pizzella also referred to a large project that Newington Community Television completed as a measure of success. The project was done with Students Against Drunk Driving (S.A.D.D.). It required the cooperation with or donations from the police, fire fighters, ambulance

service, life flight helicopter, a tuxedo rental, business and a car dealer. It was well received and a number of requests have been received for copies of the program.

Mr. Vincens articulated a basic level of defining success. He said, "Success was if you can turn on the set and get access programs rather than a black screen or a scroll, on a regular basis." He also added that beyond that, the technical quality would need to be adequate and the content needed to be something people want to watch. He then spoke of a controversial talk show that is aired in Rocky Hill that focuses on "sensationalizing" material. He said, "Even that is success. You've got people watching it and people involved doing it."

Evaluation

Leading up to the refranchising of Cox Cable there were public hearings held and proposals for refranchising submitted to D.P.U.C. The D.P.U.C. draft decision of April 4, 1990, has a section devoted to the Authority's analysis of the public access situation for the system. It briefly states the positions of the various parties and advises the company to amend its proposal. That document states that

Cox testified that it believes public access matters can be managed more effectively and efficiently in-house than by an independent, non-profit organization. The office of Consumer

Council position was, ...that access matters should be turned over to an independent, non-profit entity, if sufficient interest exists.

The Authority's position is also stated in that document:

The Authority has reviewed the Company's performance in managing and promoting public access and the plans contained in its PFR. The Authority has concluded that the Company public access proposal does not meet the needs of the franchise. The Company's record in public access has been unimpressive. While Cox claims it has managed access matters adequately, the Authority believes the Company's access activities have been primarily reactive. This is apparent in the fact that, until instructed to submit Late Filed Exhibit No. 26, showing proposed first year public access funding levels, the Company did not volunteer any specific amount. In addition, the Company proposal is for the Authority to determine direct funding levels each year. It is the Authority's opinion that, if Cox were serious about public access, it would provide detailed proposals specifying what the Company believes is a meaningful public access plan. This is not included in the Company's most recent proposal.

Although the evaluation was done by the D.P.U.C., from the documents that were made available for this research it is not made clear what the D.P.U.C. looks for to determine that a proposal does or does not meet community needs. The determination of "unimpressive" is not explained in more detail.

All of the interviewees referred to the D.P.U.C. evaluation and process during the course of the interview. At the local level they did not report any formal evaluation process. In fact, Mr. McNamara, when explaining some of the problems he had with funding requests from his perspective said,

There was a vocal minority that wanted more equipment but from our perspective the existing equipment was under utilized... They could not show that there was a lack of equipment.

This statement would support the report that there was no local evaluation efforts.

Mr. Vincens reported that there was no formal evaluation other than the public hearings and the D.P.U.C. findings. He said that the Cox Advisory Council meetings prior to the refranchising process were "more social... It was a disorganized organization... a rather informal working group... The chairman never showed up..." That situation changed when the D.P.U.C. stipulated in the license renewal that the Cox Advisory Council was to become involved with the budget for public access for the system.

Changes Requested

Following from the evaluation that the D.P.U.C. conducted which has already been mentioned the Authority included the following language in the license renewal document:

The Authority advises the Company to amend its proposal in the following manner. First, the funding level for public access capital and operating expenses in the first year of a renewal term shall be between \$105,000, the amount recommended by the Company in Late Filed Exhibit No. 26, and \$350,000, the amount recommended by the OCC. The Company shall present in writing to its Advisory Council three alternative public

access budgets and operating strategies based on the following funding levels: \$105,000, \$225,000, and \$350,000. At the Council's request, the Company shall appear before it to answer any questions about what the alternative public access proposals could provide. The Council shall then select one of the proposals, making such modifications as it deems appropriate. The budget and operating plan selected shall then be submitted to the Department with any recommendations and comments the Council or individual members would like to provide. The Department shall then approve, modify or reject the Council's recommendation. The process outlined above should not exceed 120 days from the date of a franchise renewal award to the Company, if one is granted by the Department. The Authority believes the procedure described above will provide flexible and realistic funding, increased involvement by individuals and groups within the franchise area, greater outreach and sufficient oversight and review. This procedure shall be operative for the first five years of the renewed term. At the end of the fourth year, the Company shall request that the Department conduct a proceeding to review the extent to which this public access management method has been successful [Docket no. 87-01-06, 1987, p.6].

The license renewal was granted for just a five year period. The D.P.U.C. usually grants licenses for 10 years and has the authority to grant fifteen year licenses. It seems from the above language that there was a desire to put Cox on a short leash so as to check up on them through the relicense process.

Up to this point in time, the Cox Cable Company had been documenting a \$110,000 budget for access. The money was spent almost entirely on 3 staff members salaries and benefits. The D.P.U.C. instructions in the license

agreement regarding the amount and process for accepting the budget got the Cox Advisory Council's attention and they became more "business like" according to Mr. Vincens. It is unclear how the range of financial support stipulated by D.P.U.C. is determined.

Many negotiation sessions between Cox and the Advisory Council were to occur before an agreement on the public access budget was reached. Everett Weaver was the chairperson of the sub-committee which tried to hammer out the budget details. It was really the D.P.U.C. asking the Advisory Council how should \$350,000 be spent on public access. Mr. Weaver described the budgeting process this way:

The Advisory Council chose to modify the submitted budgets. The Advisory Council listed the equipment and needs for all six towns. The list set down what was needed to do various things that people wanted to do. We came up with a reasonable list. We've made tremendous strides over their original budget which was .5 million over the five years. We've got a 1.2 million dollar budget now. This was needed for the development of access. We couldn't do it with what we had.

Mr. Pizzella added that the Advisory Council's modifications didn't ask for the maximum that D.P.U.C. said give, spend that much. He said,

We had a big stumbling block of Cox refusing to include any operating expenses. A mediator from D.P.U.C. staff was assigned and we entered into a compromise... We did get thirty thousand of operating expenses over two years.

It is not clear what portion of the thirty thousand will go to which towns.

Related to the issue of operating expenses, it is interesting to note that Mr. McNamara, when asked how is public access funded in your situation only spoke of the Cox Cable budget. He said, "The Company funds public access... the one hundred and five thousand dollar budget covers rent, all operating expenses..." Clearly Newington Community Television which has been in existence for six years and receives office and studio space from the town of Newington is only partially funded by Cox Cable. Failure to mention this aspect of public access activity and funding in their system may be an indication that Cox Cable is dismissing the viability of the independent non-profit organization.

Dan McNamara had commented that the Cox Cable equipment was not being used. When this was mentioned to Mr. Pizzella he said, "Not many people borrowed it because it is too hard to use." Later in the interview he came back to this point and said the cable company was

pushing for the 3/4" format and that the Advisory Council was opposed. They were opposed because some of the members had experience working in access and they were able to 'convince' the cable company to go to 1/2". The point was made that 1/2" is more familiar to people. It is lighter, easier to use and some people already own it.

Mr. Pizzella added weight to his point by saying, "3/4" would have killed us. We wouldn't have volunteers doing programs because carrying that stuff is hard and the length of tapes is so short." It is hard to say whether the cable company was seeking higher technical quality with the pursuit of the 3/4" equipment or was hoping for less volunteers as Mr. Pizzella predicted would happen.

Mr. McNamara, when describing the refranchising process from his perspective, said of it,

The sense I got and I defended as the company position is that there was no real rhyme or reason to the access requests. The state says give it to them but it's a vocal minority getting whatever they ask for... If the general public could vote they'd vote it (Access) out of their cable bills... There is a lot of hinderance on the company from D.P.U.C. Once the limits (of funding) are determined they wanted the maximum... It happens. The Cable Company will just give money to individuals or groups as a way of obtaining a license. The Cable Company will give away hundreds of thousands of dollars a year but the rate payers pay for it and I would caution those involved with access and the regulatory bodies from putting that kind of undue pressure on the cable company and the rate payer. I think we need to keep public access in line with the demand for it and not give into the whims and desires of a few.

At another point in the interview, he made it clearer as to what "in line" meant. He said that it was the level of "sophistication" that he had problems with. What seems contradictory here is that it was reported that the cable company had to be convinced to use 1/2" and not 3/4." 3/4" is a more a professional standard and is more sophisticated and more expensive then 1/2" equipment.

The original budget proposed by Cox included money for a second studio to be built but, through the budget process of the Advisory Board, it was decided that a mobile van would be able to be used in more ways. Other equipment changes were made. The criteria used by the Advisory Council to decide what to ask for can best be described as experience based. That is if one of the towns had been doing something and articulated a problem with continuing to do it in the same fashion they would more than likely be able to convince other Advisory Council members that they had a genuine need. This was explained to me by Mr. Vincens when he spoke of how Manchester got very little of its own equipment. Mr. Vincens said,

If we had an organization we could have asked for more equipment and got more. We don't have people or an organization in Manchester that is interested in doing it. People (from other towns) showed us they would use the equipment. They were asking based on their track record of what they had produced in the past... Towns that had very little on the air got very little.

Another change was adding a check off box to the bills of subscribers wherein subscribers could add a contribution to their bill to augment the funding for public access that Cox Cable committed itself to. The renewed franchise for Cox had this language in it:

7.5 Funding Mechanism. The Franchise will offer a mechanism, by which subscribers may contribute to public access by adding their contribution to their payment for monthly cable services. The funds collected through this mechanism will be in addition to the funding otherwise provided herein [Renewed Franchise For Cox Cable Greater Hartford, p. 18, 1990].

This change apparently was not requested by any access group, the Advisory Council or Cox Cable. It seems to be an item that the D.P.U.C. added. It is not mentioned in the D.P.U.C. Draft Decision as being proposed by any of the "Parties and Intervenors."

No interviewee mentioned this funding mechanism change as part of what happened during the renewal process. When it was mentioned by Mr. Pizzella and also by Mr. McNamara it surfaced in different contexts. Mr. Pizzella spoke of it in response to the question asking how he thinks cable subscribers feel about funding public access. Mr. McNamara brought up the new funding checking box when talking about how he feels public access should be evaluated. Perhaps it is reading too much into the place where this change was mentioned by the respective interviews but let it be noted that Mr. Pizzella of Newington Public Access related it to funding, whereas Mr. McNamara associated it with evaluation. Potentially, this change could lead to the changes in funding and evaluating access. This will be discussed in more detail in the section titled Subscribers Funding Access.

The changes that came about in the renewal process were increased monies for access required by D.P.U.C., and increased involvement of the Advisory Council with working

on the budget for public access. This increased involvement of the Advisory Council led to changes in the facilities and equipment that were included in the budget and it upheld the line item for funds for operating budgets for separate access concerns. The other change was a supplemental funding mechanism.

Standard

When asked if there was any set standard that was used to compare their public access efforts to Mr. McNamara said, "There is no quantifiable way to compare one to another." He discussed how you can look at another system and glean ideas from others to "make their way your way."

Mr. Vincens said there were only "informal, back of our head" standards that were used.

Current Issues

When answering the question of how he thought the time and money invested in public access could be used to better advantage, Mr. Pizzella reviewed the purpose of public access as he sees it:

The basis of public access to me is that public access serves a vital purpose. Without public access we would not have one of our basic freedoms. This is how people communicate. There is the Town Council, the Education Board, Zoning. So many things that are on a local level are beneficial. The public has full access to what's going on. Public access is the only means of doing this realistically if you consider that most people get their information not from papers or radio, more people watch TV. If you concede that public access serves a vital function then you have to find a way to do it. There may be better ways, I understand the D.P.U.C. has been experimenting with different ways to fund public access. They want to experiment to see which is more effective.

Mr. Vincens answered from his vantage point as the chair of the Cox Advisory Council. He said:

At this point, I don't think I could. We just went through it and you have a real watch dog group with six towns each wanting equipment. We really looked closely. We haven't gotten any money yet and we've talked about getting equipment soon. It's premature to say how it could be better spent. We haven't gotten to spend it.

He did say that he felt the two Cox staff people's..."forty hour week is mostly for Cox." He said they were there when you ask for them but "most of the day they're dealing with Cox." In a related comment earlier in the interview Mr. Vincens had also said,

These people work for Cox Cable. We have less control for input of their time. We didn't have a choice of structure. The D.P.U.C. in their wisdom decided for us.

Mr. McNamara responded by saying,

We could take the effort and the money and put it into more direct funding of philanthropic causes. That could be a better way to distribute the money.

These three responses are quite different, one speaks of basic rights, one says there's no room for improvement at this point and one feels access money could be used to directly fund philanthropic activities.

Subscribers Funding Access

All the respondents to the question on how they think subscribers feel about funding public access agreed on one thing and that was that by and large subscribers don't realize they are funding public access. From that point of similarity their responses diverge.

Mr. McNamara was quite adamant that "they (subscribers) would reduce their bill" if they could choose between paying for public access and eliminating it. He described the results of an informal, unscientific survey that he did. When customers came to the office to pay their bill or do other business they might see the survey and fill it out. He said,

I put a survey on the desk at the company office asking what programming they would like to see added or deleted from the system. The results were that public access was number one to go... people want a lower cable bill.

Mr. Weaver, in his response, related his experience of what went on at the public hearings. He said,

Three people objected at the public hearings to paying for public access. They wanted a rate reduction. The rate reduction would be fifty cents a month. The subscribers want lower rates but Cox is not telling people what the overall structure of their rates are and what the profit level is... I think most people would support funding public access.

Mr. Pizzella said,

I don't know if anyone would have a handle on what the consensus opinion would be. Those involved with public access are approving. There may be a lot not familiar with public access, they might be opposed. I don't think anyone has ever polled them. We have gotten more information out to subscribers... Do they realize? A lot of them don't realize that they fund it. We are starting this business of a check off system of subscribers adding to their bill and the extra goes to public access. This might give them a clue.

Mr. Vincens said,

I don't think they know they are funding it. If they did know, I think you'd have a bell curve. Some would be very supportive because they see a use in it. Some would be upset slightly that the bill is slightly inflated because of this. I think the majority could care less that they pay an extra buck. I don't know how much it adds to the bill. Cox will be doing a survey on cable service and we'll ask for a piece of that survey. We want to get involved in the survey that goes out.

Potential Evaluation Directions

Responses on how public access could be evaluated were quite different. They ranged from putting public access

operations more on a marketplace scheme to feeling strongly that audience size is not how to evaluate, to being unsure how it could be evaluated.

Mr. McNamara was the advocate of the marketplace orientation. He said,

Public access should be evaluated by a means which would allow the rate payers to choose between options and understand exactly what the costs of public access are, the benefits, as well as understand the alternative to public access such as direct funding to towns for non-profit groups or a blend of public access and direct funding. But I guess the biggest thing is that the rate payer understand the money expended for public access comes out of their pockets and I wish they knew that the vocal minority puts undue pressure on their rates.

When asked why he didn't just put the price of access as an itemization on to subscriber's bills. He said,

We don't do it. It is not our place to do that kind of thing, at least not at this point. We make that point known when we are asked. How do they feel about spending three hundred and fifty thousand dollars? We let them know there is a small group of people applying that pressure and that we do give in to the pressure. It will be at the expense of the rate payer.

Responding to what criteria could be used to evaluate public access, Mr. McNamara said,

Public access could be on a tiering package. If you want it, you pay for it. It certainly is interesting to know what people would pay for.

Mr. Pizzella, on the other hand, felt strongly that you should not base the evaluation of public access on the number of viewers. He said,

To me that has nothing to do with public access. If it had one viewer it would still be worthwhile. It is like the right to vote, many people don't (vote) but don't tell me you're going to take it away because you don't exercise it. It has got to be (based on) the type of programming. We want more people to view it but that is not as important as the type of programming we're doing: education, public service and giving people access many times for invalids and shut ins, direct access to government meetings that would otherwise would not be available. Technical quality should not be as important as the quality of content. We, for instance, program government meetings, right to know about government, controversial issues in local government, recycling, reassessment, election coverage, public service, local sports and the SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) film. These programs are meritorious in and of themselves whether people are viewing them or not. It should not be based on viewership. Usually, when you're talking television you are talking Nielsen ratings. This is not that situation.

He could not be any more specific about how the "type of program" could be used to evaluate access.

Mr. Weaver pointed out that to do a survey which would attempt to figure out the numbers of viewers would cost money and he said, "We'd like to spend our money on developing public access."

Mr. Vincens was fairly uncertain as to a possible meaningful evaluation process. He said,

That's very, very difficult. Public access is one of those things that is probably viewed by very few people, at least in this town. I don't think

they watch it very much and those that watch it have their own agendas. I don't even think the majority in this town even knows it is out there. Well, you can do it through surveys but if you don't know it's there you don't watch it. Cox has indicated that they want to spend some money on the advertising. I'm opposed to throwing money that way. I think you've got to get decent regular programming that people could see and then develop a following. It's got to be regular. It's got to be there every day or every week, the same time the same place, then you do an evaluation but for the spots that we put on here, like the news, the audience is so small I don't know how you'd evaluate it. I'm sure that the kids watch and some parents watch the news from the High School but of the 1400 kids and their parents I would say a very very small portion watch it. Town meetings, well, people who are interested watch it but those are long drawn out meetings that go for 4 to 5 hours at a clip and you just watch that verbiage going through. Right now, I don't know how you would evaluate public access. I don't think there's enough people watching where you'd get any feel for it. Now in Newington where they're doing other things, maybe spot clips on there to say you will be sending out surveys and to answer the questions. This town, where public access is so small it's inconceivable how you'd get feedback. Viewership would be a large measure of success.

When asked who should be the evaluator of public access, all respondents identified the group that they are affiliated with as the potential evaluator. Mr. McNamara identified the cable company as the potential evaluator while Mr. Vincens and Pizzella identified the Advisory Council as playing a leading role.

Mr. McNamara said,

The Cable Company, in consultation with the Advisory Committee. If it is a service that is paid for, whether to carry it or not would be a business decision. It would be simple economics

to determine the effectiveness of it. It's people's desire to watch what's good and not what isn't. CNN is on because people are willing to pay for it. So you have subscriptions that are generated. They buy it because they want it, not because it's good for them.

Mr. Pizzella felt that the evaluator of public access should "not be the Cable Company but maybe a combination of the D.P.U.C. and the Advisory Council."

Mr. Vincens suggested "a sub-committee of the Advisory Council, with people from the cable company and maybe someone from an outside group" for a special effort evaluation. He justified this last inclusion by saying, "Sometimes you get ingrained if you only use local people because you see only what you've always seen."

All three interviewees felt the Advisory Council had a role to play in a potential evaluation of public access. Mr. Vincens did, however, mention that he has some concerns about how political the Advisory Council appointments can be and that the term of an appointment may be too short to gain and then put to use the gained expertise concerning cable television issues and workings. He said,

Appointments are a little too political... We should have the Council appointed in a different way, based more on what they know of what is going on... By the time you learn you're out... They are appointed because they are Republican which is the party that's in now...

Chapter Summary

This chapter reports the results of twelve in-depth interviews which were conducted over a three week period. The interviews were done over the phone and recorded onto audio tape. The quoted responses of the interviewees make up the bulk of this chapter. Typically the interview lasted between one and two hours. The researcher used clarification and probing techniques during the interview to confirm the understanding of the answers provided.

A wide range of structures between the access efforts were found. Some of the differences stem from state versus local regulation of public access cable television. While other differences reflect the particular contract agreement with the cable company in the community. That is to say some access efforts utilize the structure of community television which combines local origination and public access efforts. Two of the communities studied have undergone substantial structural changes as a result of the recent relicensing process. The reasons leading up to those changes are particularly interesting with regard to the evaluation of public access cable television.

The next chapter will discuss and compare the responses of the twelve interviewees.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

The last chapter presented by community the results of the twelve interviews conducted. This chapter will combine these in order to compare and contrast those results. This chapter will use headings similiar to those used in the last chapter: definition, structure, goals and success, evaluation, changes requested, standard, current issues, subscribers funding public access, evaluation, changes requested, standard, current issues, and potential evaluation directions.

This chapter will show that on a general level there seems to be quite a bit of agreement on the definition of public access despite the fact that three interviewers had difficulty in defining public access cable television. There seems to be agreement that editorial control should be in the hands of the local access producer and that the purpose of public access is to allow the public a means to

communicate their ideas and views. One observation that is made is that the definition should include reference to actual usage rather than to potential usage.

The access efforts studied here all reported combining educational, public and government access and were financially supported by subscriber fees passed through via the cable company. Their structures beyond that point were quite diverse. This wide variety of structures and regulations within and between states will continue to make study of public access cable television difficult on a national level. This sheds light on why the case history approach common to the study of public access cable television is prevalent. The structural changes and what provoked them in Monson and Newton are probably the most educational aspects of this research. The choice to study franchises which had recently undergone relicensing was a good one.

Formally stated goals were not found. The sense of the responses received expressed a general desire to do more of the same sorts of things. Some concerns about the lack of clearly stated goals are expressed in this chapter.

Evaluation was generally characterized by discussion among advisory board members. Decisions that needed to be made were largely based on past performance according to

the respondents who were advisory board members. While the cable companies would often refer to viewership surveys as their mode of evaluation.

Changes follow the pattern set in the goals section. Most of the changes seem to be to increase some current resource, for example to increase the size of a studio.

Standards used in evaluating their public access efforts were informal ones collected by visiting other access efforts or were based on information that consultants brought to the negotiations process.

Most of the respondents in this research did not think that subscribers were aware that they were funding public access cable television. It is pointed out in this chapter that this could be a potential problem for access efforts.

The results in the area of potential evaluation directions makes it clear that there is more diversity of opinion than consensus. The cable company employees seemed more concerned than advisory board members with the number of viewers. Most respondents suggested using their current practices for evaluating public access cable television in the future.

Following the discussion which compares the results from the various communities, the chapter provides an overall conclusion section for the research report and the last section of this chapter makes suggestions for further study.

Definition of Public Access

At least three respondents had some difficulty defining public access cable television. Mr. Doar stated that the definitions are "vague" and the distinctions are not clear. Instances where the same programming was called public access by some and local origination by others occurred in the Winchester case.

Most of the respondents included in their definition of public access language about allowing the public a means to communicate ideas and views by making equipment, training and channel space available to the community served. By and large, the orientation of the definitions that were offered indicated that the programming was home grown, either by being produced locally or by virtue of the fact that the programming served some specific local need. This was the case for instance with the Italian Network in Westerly. Others articulated how public access cable television allowed communication of some local concern that

would never appear on a commercial station because of its local nature.

Some interviewees' definitions of public access cable television included specifications regarding control of decisions, specifically stating that the cable company should not be involved in any decisions. The research revealed that this would not even be possible in Rhode Island where state regulations require the cable company to run the effort. It was exclusively non-cable company employees who offered comments about editorial control being held by the public access user as part of their definition.

The definition of public access was contrasted to the model of community television. This is where the cable company runs the local programming effort and those efforts are a blend of local origination and public access. A historical perspective based on the development of the community television model provided by Rika Welsh pointed out the economic savings of combining local origination and public access.

Editorial control in most respondents' definitions was held by the public. One respondent went so far as to point out that public access cable television is unlike a letter to the editor of a newspaper because the newspaper can

choose not to print the letter. Editorial limitations were only expressed through legal limitations of obscene or libelous programming. Most interviewees would agree that staff, by definition, are not involved with content decisions in public access programming. Only the public access producer controls the content.

Respondents did mention money as part of their definitions and others referred to the non-commercial aspect of public access television. It was only cable company employees who mentioned as part of their definition's statements claiming that public access did not make money. This seems to be an important characteristic of public access cable television. The sense seems to be that the function of public access is not to make money but to serve the information or communication needs of the community and that a member of the public who wants to use public access cable television does not need to have money to spend to get his message distributed to the community.

Cable company employees were more likely to expand on the training aspects of public access. For instance Cronin and McMahon expanded on this in their definitions. Also cable company employees seemed more likely to mention that public access does not make money. If an advisory committee member mentioned money in their definition it would be more likely in the context of explaining that

public access programming would be economically unfeasible if attempted by a commercial station. Non-cable company employees were more likely to mention the decision making and editorial control being held by access producers as part of their definitions.

This research will not offer a specific definition of public access cable television. All of the aspects mentioned are important characteristics of a working definition. What is recommended is that words like visible, available, and access to, not be used. A better definition would be more results oriented and include words such as 'usage'. For public access can have quite a feeble definition unless this usage orientation is included. Surely the channel sitting empty and the equipment put in a closet is available but may not be used. Public access cable television isn't really anything until usage of available resources occurs.

Structure

All of the communities studied described their access efforts as combined public access, educational access and governmental access. Some of the communities such as Winchester and Westerly also combined local origination efforts with access. Combinations encompass both staff and

channel usage. Thus programming is often not easily identified as local origination, educational access or public access.

All of the access efforts are or will soon be receiving financial support from the cable company through subscriber fees. For most of the cases funding is almost entirely provided by the cable company. The exception is Newington, Connecticut where the town government has provided office space, some equipment and volunteers do all the work. Even Newington plans to receive some operating budget from the cable company in the newly agreed upon budget.

Massachusetts public access efforts are structured to serve towns. This seems natural enough since the cable company is also structured to serve a town. The town, after all, is the franchising authority in Massachusetts. It is interesting to note that even in other states the cases revealed a propensity for public access to take on a town orientation. Recall that Newington has its own access effort and Rocky Hill was also described as having separate efforts. Also the channel, even though it is shared among the towns, was described as being Newington's certain evenings, and another town's to use on other evenings. Further evidence of the town orientation is Tom Chinigo's description of how other towns want their weekly town

meetings cablecast just like Westerly enjoys. The case of Monson, where Monson and Palmer have joined together to establish an access center may prove to be an exception to this trend but since their efforts are just getting underway it is impossible to say.

No two communities could be described to be in a similar position vis a vis the structure of their access efforts. Winchester and Westerly could be described as both having the access effort staffed by cable company. There the similarities would cease for Westerly is part of a regional service area and Winchester's community programming effort will be renting space from the city. Also the Westerly access effort is structured according to the specifications dictated by the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission regulations while Winchester's structure was developed as a communitytelevision concept by Continental Cablevision.

Three separate non-profit corporations were described in this research. They were: Municipal Public Access of Monson and Palmer, Massachusetts, Newington Community Television in Connecticut and Newton Cable Access Corporation in Massachusetts. These access corporations are coming from different histories.

Newton is switching from a community television model which had been run by the cable company to a separate non-profit corporation structure. Continental Cablevision has stated that they will cease all local origination programming. Therefore, Newton is going from a public access/local origination mix of programming to purely public access. This will put some specific pressures on the access corporation. Staff from Continental used to cover certain events. The new Board of Directors will have to decide whether staff will cover events or if all programming decisions be made by the volunteer access producers from the community. The hazards of not treating all users in the community the same were clearly expanded on by Rika Welsh in the Newton case report.

Monson had a very small public access effort prior to the new contract and is planning to vastly expand public access efforts. This community never had local origination programming service so subscribers will not miss what they never had. The structure of Municipal Public Access where two communities are combining efforts is unique to this report. It is the only separate non-profit access corporation in the report to combine two towns.

Newington Community Television, a volunteer organization, exists in addition to the public access staff and facilities maintained by the Cox Cable Company which

serves the Greater Hartford area. Their efforts are focused on coverage of municipal meetings though it is up to the members of Newington Community Television to decide what do cover and cablecast. Newington Community Television is supported by town government giving them free office space and utilities as well as some equipment. This town government support is supplemented by donations, grants and equipment provided by Cox Cable and the Cox staff are available to anyone in the region with questions about public access.

In contrast, Manchester, Connecticut, which is in the same service region as Newington, has no public access organization and their public access activity could be described as sparse and sporadic. They are hopeful though, that people from the community will become more interested and involved in the future. Manchester depends more heavily on the Cox staff and facilities to accomplish what public access efforts they are involved in.

Oversight of the public access efforts occurs at various levels in the situations covered in this research. At the personnel supervision level those companies which run access supervise staff. This was found to be a source of frustration in some situations. Lack of control over staff, staff turnover, caliber of hired personnel and lack of control over what programming staff produces was the

major reason Newton pursued a non-profit access corporation structure run by a Board of Directors. The Winchester case also offered evidence of some of this frustration when Allen Eyden of the town's Cable Advisory Committee bemoaned the fact that even with more staff, coverage of local events has not improved. Tom Chinigo in Westerly, Rhode Island, also spoke of how he felt he had to "keep on" checking up on staff. Mr. Vincens of Manchester, Connecticut, also expressed some concern that staff that were supposed to be for public access were probably doing Cox work during their forty hour work week and were not spending that much time on public access.

The situations which have a separate access corporation and have staff were Monson and Newton. Both of these situations are too new to determine whether the Board of Directors' supervision of staff will be a better way of overseeing public access staff. Both cases provided statements that indicated this kind of supervision of staff was preferred to cable company control of staff time.

The Massachusetts towns usually had a Cable Advisory Committee which provided the town's issuing authority with recommendations regarding cable television. In Rhode Island a comparable committee oversees cable issues on a regional basis and there is also a statewide committee to feed information into the State's Department of Public

Utilities. Connecticut has regional oversight committees also. Both the Connecticut and Rhode Island cases provided evidence for some concern about the committees really doing what they are supposed to do. Tom Chinigo said that some of the committees in Rhode Island exist in "name only" and Mr. Vincens of Manchester, Connecticut said that for a while, the Cox Advisory Committee was more of a "social" gathering. Sufficient oversight structures seem to exist but the reality of the level of commitment and involvement of the people involved seems to vary by a wide margin.

At the state level, Massachusetts is the least involved with oversight of cable issues. This stands to reason since in Massachusetts the towns are the issuing authority while in Rhode Island and Connecticut, the license is granted by the respective public utility office. At the state level, it is interesting to note that in Connecticut the office of Consumer Council becomes involved in the licensing process.

Goals/Success

On the whole, those interviewed did not articulate formally stated goals for access. Responses did not reveal any higher purpose but rather spoke of doing "more" of the same sorts of things that they are currently doing. Some

respondents defined goals in terms of access users and their satisfaction and not in terms of audience size. These responses typically were from advisory committee members and non-profit access corporations while those respondents connected with cable companies were more inclined to make reference to subscriber satisfaction and audience size. This is not surprising when one considers that the employees are connected with a business entity that depends on audience desires for subscriptions, while the advisory committee members probably got involved with public access for philosophical or personal fulfillment reasons. Although the difference is not surprising it may be the root source of the differences of opinion that sometimes arise between the two groups. Those who focused on users in defining goals would often mention personal expression and political empowerment as part of the goal of public access.

Other responses that were characterized by the sentiment of "doing more of what we do" included: increasing outreach efforts, graduating more access volunteers from the training program, increasing the number of volunteers, getting more air time filled with access programming, getting more civic organizations producing programming, increasing retention of trained access producers, increasing the number of completed shows and increasing the quality of programming. It is important to

note that while terms such as "more" and "increase" were used by respondents when probed for what level of increase, or how to measure the amount of diversity or how to distinguished a higher quality level, respondents were unable to state any objective number or measure. Their responses would be vague. For instance, they would say with regard to air time, when we have programming on for 24 hours that's enough, or when every civic organization is involved that's enough or you can never improve quality enough, you always have to keep working on it.

Many responses mentioned diversity as a goal. This was expressed in terms of diversity of viewpoints as well as diversity of users being sought. For instance, Frank McNamara of Westerly Cable expressed his positive feelings about getting senior citizens involved so as to provide programming that meets their needs while Mr. McNamara from Cox Cable in Manchester, Connecticut wanted to see more diverse views on local issues.

At least three respondents connected awards for programming with their answers on goals or success. They felt that this outside standard could be used to measure how access programming compares to others producing such programming and could help inspire access producers to higher levels of accomplishment by being exposed to high caliber programs.

Other goals were also expressed. Allen Eyden, of Winchester, expressed as a goal the desire to help get the city more money by requiring the cable company to rent space from the city. Frank McMahon, stated the goals of his department as "public relations." Treating all users equally was mentioned as a goal by Tom Chinigo.

This research demonstrated the general lack of clearly stated goals. Granted, some of the goals of public access may be difficult to measure, but there may be indicators that can signal improvement or lack thereof, for hard to measure goals. Goals and a definition for success should be thought about and articulated to a more specific degree than was present in this research. Without goals, a certain sense of complacency may occupy access efforts. If goals or the terms of success are not articulated and remain fuzzy the chances of developing an action plan to achieve those goals is clearly greatly diminished. Without stated goals and definitions for success, access efforts may tend to lose their philosophical bearings and the larger purpose falls prey to getting buried by the day to day the trivia of small decisions. Even small decisions can be assisted by a strong philosophical statement of purpose and goal.

Perhaps goals and definitions for success have not been developed because either cable companies who don't really want to do access or volunteers who haven't got the time, commitment and energy needed for goal development are at the helm. Certainly the answers obtained by this research indicate that the ideas are there but the vague ideas of goals and success need, in my opinion, to be more clearly stated, perhaps even put in behavioral objective terms. This would be a benefit with regard to the attainment of goals because goals would be clearly accomplished or not accomplished and be "seen" by all as such. The process of developing goals, prioritizing them, working out an action plan for their accomplishment and then reviewing their accomplishment would be a positive developmental process. Furthermore, without clear goals and objectives, people outside the access effort may have a tendency to ignore access accomplishments if those accomplishments are not clearly documented. Without clear objectives access efforts may leave themselves open to criticism from business minded cable companies who are asked to provide access efforts with a substantial amount of funding. Without specific criteria for what constitutes success and failure access runs into situations similar to what was found in Newton where one respondent spoke of the level of viewers being good and another respondent feeling that the level of viewers is not impressive. This sort of inability to interpret how access is doing follows from a

lack of clearly stated goals by those involved. The comparative aspect of goals is important. Whether the goals use comparison from year to year within the community or use a comparison between their access effort and another community's access effort, the comparison provides valuable information as to the progress being made toward a larger goal.

Evaluation

Evaluation of public access efforts studied are generally characterized by informal modes of evaluation which take the form of discussion. The discussion is based on personal experience, anecdotal information and a background of having visited other access concerns. Many of these discussions occur within the context of committee meetings while there is also a component of evaluation through the public meeting process in each case that was studied. Typically, the various people who were interviewed for this study would state that the committee they served on spent over half the time of meetings discussing public access issues even though the committee's purpose is to deal with all cable issues. Generally, public access was singled out as the area where the committee might be able to make a change or a contribution. This concentration on public access issues

at committee meetings was mentioned by Tom Chinigo, Martin Alpert, Andy Vincens and Allen Eyden. This basic rule of thumb that characterized many of the decisions that came from this discussion evaluation process was that past performance in large part determined future based decisions. For example, Mr. Vincens of Manchester, Connecticut reported that those communities within the Greater Hartford region who had documented a track record of production would be the communities that would be more likely to receive the equipment they were currently seeking.

None of the respondents identified a formal evaluation process that was used to evaluate access efforts. The public hearings and the written reports of public hearings were mentioned as the main tool that was then used to formulate plans and budgets. The Monson situation is an example of the emphasis put on the collection of community needs through their articulation at the public meetings that were held.

Four cases provided evidence that the cable company does viewership surveys which includes some questions regarding public access. Mr. Tony Doar, in the Newton case, noted that 60% of respondents reported that they had watched the community television channel, although this was based on a response rate of just 15%. Similar surveys were

done in other reported cases. Respondents indicated that feedback on public access efforts would be more oriented toward suggesting what else might be a good idea to include in the programming offered rather than being used as an indicator of which programs should be cancelled. One respondent said that if the results concerning the level of viewers of an access program were not encouraging he would not tell the access producer of those results. One informal feedback effort reported that responding subscribers identified the public access channel as the "first to go" when they were asked what they would delete or add to the channel lineup.

At the state level, in the Rhode Island case, evaluation of producer training occurred as a result of cable companies stating that 90% of producers trained did not return to produce programming. At the state level in Connecticut the Department of Public Utilities reported that Cox Cable's Access efforts were inadequate but did not identify any criteria they used to reach this conclusion.

This informal evaluation process has produced a fair bit of change that will be covered in the next section. This method of evaluation seems adequate and appropriate to the access effort but it is important to note that the research identified some concern on the part of Dan McNamara from Cox Cable in the Greater Hartford area that

it was not acceptable. Mr. McNamara stated that the access people were requesting more equipment while his records indicated that existing equipment was not being fully utilized. He further indicated that he believes those representing the access requests formed a small, vocal minority who did not have the majority of subscribers behind them. He contended that if given the choice subscribers would delete the public access programming rather than pay for it. Furthermore, his position was that the cable companies were under undue pressure to provide access money or face non-renewal of their license. This aspect of evaluation of access efforts may warrant further attention and perhaps a more formal evaluation approach.

Currently, public access is mandated at the state level in Rhode Island and Connecticut and is requested in proposals that Massachusetts municipalities ask cable companies to provide or to fund. This current level of support may be resting on shaky ground. As this research has pointed out, it is largely thought that the public does not realize that subscriber rates pay for public access. If subscribers were to realize that they pay for public access, the political support for the access efforts could erode. The direct funding mechanism of paying for access from subscriber monthly rates may need to change. Clearly this type of changed situation would necessitate a different evaluation model. Furthermore, in situations

such as that discussed by Mr. McNamara, specific criteria for the conditions under which funding is requested and granted should be developed. This future perspective of how public access should be evaluated in light of these possible changes will be discussed later.

Changes Requested

Generally, the changes that were requested in the cases presented here were changes of quantity rather than changes in quality. For instance, a larger studio was requested in Winchester and Westerly, more money was requested in Connecticut, Monson and Newton, more staff and event coverage was requested in Winchester and more equipment was a universal request save for Westerly. Westerly requested more outreach. Characteristically the changes that were requested were perpetuated by a few people in the community who felt they knew what improvements would be good for the community as a whole. The qualitative changes were by far more interesting and far reaching.

The Newton case presented the biggest qualitative change from a cable company run, community television model to solely a public access non-profit corporation. The main reason for this change was the desire on the part of the

city of Newton to have more control over the hiring and supervision of access personnel. Mr. Alpert said that he felt the new Board of Directors ruling access is expected to be more responsive to community needs.

Monson requested funding for the establishment of an access center complete with equipment and staff. There was already a non-profit access corporation established but the new entity serves both Monson and Palmer and, as was mentioned, includes staff which the access corporation never had before. These changes came about less from the communities' experience with access but rather through an extensive educational effort to explain to the community the potential of public access cable television. The public hearing in Monson is the only instance in this research where there was a report of a number of members of the public speaking up in support of public access cable television.

One of the changes that reveals the most about the character of public access, in my opinion, occurred in the Greater Hartford system. When the D.P.U.C. requested that the Cox Advisory Committee get involved in the budgeting process, some of the equipment purchases that had been proposed by Cox changed qualitatively. Cox had submitted a capital equipment schedule which included building a second studio on the west side of the river and purchasing

additional 3/4" equipment. The Cox staff are professionally involved with public access cable television and from their professional vantage point, they decided a studio was needed. The people who would have been the users of that studio decided that was not the best way to go. They decided that they wanted a mobile van so they could go where the action was and switch the event live and cablecast live from the scene of an event. The differences in the conclusions reached point out the qualitative contrast in the perspective of the access user and the access professional. The access user understands the sorts of events that are offered in a community that might make sense to cablecast and realizes that these events can not be brought into the studio. The professional has been trained to try to control the video production as much as possible. There is ultimate control for the video producer within the studio, thus the professional would have a tendency to favor studio shoots. This change in the request from studio to mobile van serves as evidence of the importance that experienced access users play in the further success of normal every day citizens using public access cable television as an extension of communications possibilities they have.

Similarly the decision to not purchase the 3/4" equipment as was recommended by the Cox professional personnel and to go with the 1/2" equipment so that it

would be easier for access users to carry and to operate is revealing. The importance of this change can be appreciated by recalling what Mr. Pizzella said of it, "3/4" equipment would have killed us..." It is worth noting that many positive comments regarding the need for and positive result of involvement of experienced access users in the decision making process came up frequently with regard to evaluation and the composition of the various committees that serve in an advisory capacity. Many changes that were requested were the result of personal experience.

There is, however, in my opinion, a down side to listening to all of the recommendations of experienced access producers. That is, as access producers create productions over the years, it is only natural that their productions could very easily become more and more complex. The producer wants to try new things and continue to develop more sophisticated productions. This may lead to a never ending escalation in the level of sophistication and capability of equipment that is requested. This study did not focus on this possible trend but Mr. McNamara of Cox Cable did articulate his sense that this is where he felt some of the equipment requests were coming from. I believe that clear criteria need to be developed to differentiate a "would like to have" piece of equipment from a "need to have" request. Television is an expensive

medium to produce in and the subscribers foot the bill. This funding source and its implications for requests will be discussed later.

Standard

None of the respondents acknowledged using a standard to compare their access efforts to. Most said they used an informal comparative standard that was in the back of their head. All of the respondents reported that either those involved with decision making processes had visited other access efforts or outside expertise was part of the decision making and negotiation process.

That outside perspective was present in Winchester. Mr. Alpert reported that the Cable Advisory Committee had visited other community television efforts, though these visits were limited to other Continental offices. Monson hired Mr. Olchick as a negotiator based on his many years of experience in public access. Newton hired Peter Epstein as legal counsel. Mr. Epstein's law practice specializes in representing towns in cable negotiations. Tom Chinigo referred to his experience on the statewide Advisory Council and his work which involved studying public access training programs as well as the statewide programming competition as components which have allowed him to develop

an informal standard which he has in mind. Also, Mr. Knotte at the state cable office is in a unique position to have experience with all the access efforts throughout the state. Mr. Vincens a part of the regional committee has become familiar with what other towns in his region are doing with public access. More importantly, since the D.P.U.C. is the licensing authority in Connecticut, there is a professional staff available which deals with cable issues that arise.

Many of the respondents who are involved with local committees expressed some energy going into educating themselves about public access. Although this is very commendable on their part, hiring a consultant or legal counsel with cable expertise to help negotiate contracts is preferable. These local committees are volunteers and are probably not very knowledgable about access issues or television production. The local committee members bring to the committee their judgement and knowledge about what this particular town's desires and needs are. The outside consultant who is well read and has vast personal experience of other access efforts can bring the vision of the realm of possibilities to the town. It is interesting to note that the cases where outside consultation was sought or provided at the re-license function are the towns where more change seems to have occurred. Notably, Newton and Monson have changed their access efforts quite

dramatically. On the other hand, Winchester, the town which reported the least outreaching of comparative access efforts changed very little. This is not stated to imply causality of any kind but may be more of an indication that when change of some kind is desired, the people involved feel more of a need to educate themselves as to the options and seek outside help.

This study provides reports that indicate this outside consultation is brought in once every ten or fifteen years for cable contract negotiations. This is appropriate for that critical period but there is too much time that passes without much outside influence. I think that the process of education for citizens who become involved in serving on committees should include an on going schedule of visits where the committee would visit at least one other access operation per year. Perhaps this could be scheduled as the business of one of the committee meetings. There are also regional meetings of the N.F.L.C.P. that could serve as a professional development tool for these volunteers.

There is much to be gained by comparing the access efforts from various towns and states. It is very difficult to find a way to quantitatively compare one to another so that the visits are a way to qualitatively garner information from others involved with access.

There is, however, some numerical information that can be very helpful in learning from the visits that are made. If the method for calculation was standardized, collection of numerical information would be more useful in making comparisions. For instance, if information about the number of active access users are reported a definition of what constituted an active access producer needs to be agreed upon. Furthermore, the raw numbers of users would have more comparative meaning if they were reported in users per thousand homes passed. For instance, Newton reported that there were twelve active producers and the system passes 16.5 thousand homes. Dividing 12 by 16,500 results in .73 users per thousand households passed. One would expect that larger cities would have a larger raw number of users. If we calculate "users per thousand homes passed" it corrects for the number of homes in a service area.

Table 2

Active Producers Per Thousand Homes Passed

Active is defined as producing or helping to produce a program within the last two years.

Winchester	1.88
Monson	2.69
Newton	.73
Rhode Island	.99
Connecticut	1.06

Along these lines when reporting the percentage of people who say they watch the access programming a standard procedure should be used. Some studies only ask subscribers while other studies survey the population of the town as a whole so as to include both non-subscribers and subscribers. This would make for a wide range of percentages that would not yield very accurate information if compared between communities that have used those different methods. One percentage of viewership that was reported in this study in the Newton case by Tony Doar of Continental was based on the 15% response rate mailed in by subscribers. I think it's making quite a leap to say that the 15% who responded were a good sample of the population as a whole. Yet this information is reported as a factual viewer percentage rate. How the question is asked should be standardized also. Some research asks if you have ever watched while others ask if you have watched in the last month, week, etc. I call upon the professional and trade associations involved in this field to make recommendations as to the standard practice for collecting this information.

Evaluation, in summary, is generally characterized by qualitative non-formal models which use discussion as the primary method. Outside expertise is sought through visits to other access efforts and through the hiring of outside consultants and legal counsel. Numerical data collection is not standardized.

Current Issues

The questions asked to uncover current issues brought to the surface more of a response from the Rhode Island case than any other. Three respondents in three cases commented that since they had just been through the franchise renewal process and had changed the running of access through that process, they had no current issues to deal with. They felt they would have to wait and see how the proposed changes worked out before making any more changes. The Rhode Island situation probably had the most to comment on because they do not ever undergo a re-licensing process. Mr. Chinigo, from Westerly, commented on the need for increased outreach. He also felt there was too much local origination and there was confusion caused by having access and local origination programming on the same channel.

There were three comments referring to the staff of public access. Mr. Vincens questioned how much time Cox staff devoted to public access tasks as opposed to Cox work. Mr. Eyden, in the Winchester case, spoke of how the increased level of staffing for the community television effort there had not resulted in more events being covered. He felt that he was glad that the license that

had been given was only for five years. He felt that the control of staff time and duties might become enough of an issue to warrant looking into the possibility of having a separate non-profit access corporation. The new structure would have a Board of Directors who have direct control over staff. The third comment regarding staff was offered by Mr. Frank McMahon from Westerly Cable. He felt that more staff were needed so that when access got busy, local origination efforts would not suffer from lack of attention.

It would seem that the licensing process serves as an occasion for settling issues with regard to public access. As was mentioned in the evaluation section of this chapter, there is a question as to whether this process is undergone often enough to resolve issues in a timely manner. Perhaps there should be more language in licenses that would address evaluations on a yearly basis so that there would be a formal process that would bring all the parties together more often than the re-license process does.

Subscribers Funding Public Access

By and large the respondents in this research did not think that subscribers were aware that they were funding public access cable television. Mr. Lionne of Winchester's

Cable Company, Grace Makepeace from Municipal Public Access in Monson, Frank McMahon of Westerly Cable, Tom Chinigo from the Westerly Advisory Council, Ed Pizzella from the Cox Advisory Council in the Greater Hartford area also from Newington Community Television Inc., Mr. Vincens, the Chair of the Cox Advisory Council in Greater Hartford and Dan McNamara of Cox Cable in the Greater Hartford area all articulated the sense that subscribers did not realize that they paid for public access programming through their monthly subscription rates.

Others did not clearly state that they felt subscribers did not know they fund public access but one gets a sense that is the drift of their response. Mr. Alpert from Newton's Cable Advisory Committee for example started his response by saying, "If they knew what it cost them..." Mr. Doar of Continental Cable which serves Newton said, "They know there's a cost, to the extent of what percentage, they don't give it a thought."

Mr. McNamara was very adamant in his feeling that subscribers should be told that they are paying for public access television, although he did not feel it was the cable company's place to inform customers by adding a separate line items to monthly bills.

On the other hand, three respondents indicated that they felt subscribers were aware of financially supporting public access efforts. Mr. Eyden made a leap of connection and said, "They were in favor of public access, I'm sure they understood they paid for it." Mr. Olchick responded by saying that in Monson, Public Access is so new that they would have to be sold on what is to come. Mr. Weaver of Newington Community Television Inc. and a member of the Cox Advisory Council recounted that he had gone to all the public hearings and at those hearings three members of the public spoke of their preference of having a rate reduction instead of having public access.

The concept of subscribers knowing they pay for public access and further knowing how much public access costs each subscriber is critical to honesty of promoting public access expenditures. It feels like a fraud is being perpetrated when so many people involved heavily in public access do not think that subscribers realize they pay for public access. There were a number of occasions in interviews where the impression one gets is that the cable company is paying the bill rather than serving as the collection agent.

As examples of this kind of statement, refer back to Grace Makepeace's definition of public access. She said public access was a way of communicating at "no cost" to

the user. There may be no extra charges for using the cameras or studio but public access does have a cost and constant awareness of this is important. Another example of the sense that the cable company pays for access and not the subscriber was provided by Martin Alpert of Newton's Cable Advisory Committee. He said as part of one of his responses, "The funds are available from Continental. It isn't all passed on... (the funds) can't be used for anything else." Merrill Olchick also said, "If we ask the cable company to make investments we owe them an honest effort on our part to make good use of what they've given us."

Although the actual check may be written by the cable company, it is subscribers through monthly payments who are ultimately supporting the financial expenditures of public access cable television. Although I am not aware of the entire rate structure of the cable companies discussed and have no idea how much profit margin is built into the rate structure, it is clear from the responses from cable companies found herein that the subscribers in the end pay for whatever the cable company decides to expend money on. It must be made clear and language must be specific on this, the cable company does not absorb the costs of public access programming. This is very important for there are few things that would be rejected if they are perceived as being free. Most people would take the attitude that if

it's free, what the heck, we have nothing to lose, let's try it. I would hate to think that the financial support received from subscribers is predicated on the fact that they don't know they are supporting it but this in fact is most likely the case.

Table 3 shows a rough calculation of the cost of access per subscriber per year. The reported budgets attempt to include operating and capital equipment reflected in the dollar figure used. This figure is then divided by the reported number of subscribers. It is interesting to note that this table shows a wide range but it also indicates that the high teens is the most common cost. This is a very small sample but it shows that there is value in comparing this figure from one community to another. Subscribers should know what they are paying so they can determine if they feel it is worth paying for. They may then act on their feeling but without the information they are kept ignorant.

This study does offer evidence through respondents' statements that if subscribers are given a choice or given knowledge that they pay for public access they might complain. It was more likely to be a cable company employee who said that if subscribers did come to realize they pay for public access, they would have negative reactions. Mr. Lionne of Continental Cablevision who was

Table 3

Cost of Public Access Per Subscriber Per Year			
	Budget*	# Subscribers	Cost to Subscriber
Winchester	\$ 95,000	5095	\$ 18.64
Monson	\$ 70,000	1317	\$ 53.15
Newton	\$280,000	16,500	\$ 16.96
Westerley	N/A		
Greater Hartford	\$350,000	43,000	\$ 6.48

* Only includes money that was reported as coming from the cable company and not municipal support of free rent etc.

interviewed for the Winchester case reported that in other Continental service areas where there is a separate public access corporation Continental adds a line item on to the bill which indicates how much is being added to the bill that is given to the access corporation. He said that when it appears on subscribers' bills people get upset. Dan

McNamara reported on an informal study he conducted that indicated that the public access programming would be the first to go according to the responses he got when he asked subscribers what they would like to see added or deleted from the channel lineup. Non-cable-company employees were more likely to report that they did not think subscribers would mind paying for access but their statements were often linked to an "if " statement such as "If people understood" they would not mind paying.

From the cable company's perspective, Mr. McNamara pointed out that cable companies agree to public access in order to get the license renewed. It is interesting to note that the Cable Communications Act of 1984 relieved the companies from the constraint of rate control. So that now, when more money is requested for public access, I suspect cable companies have an easier time saying yes to that request since they have no rate controls. The incentive to keep costs down is now more a marketing concern. The cable companies are no longer being squeezed at both ends which used to be the case, when there were controls on the rates subscribers would pay. When rates are controlled any increase in cost is less likely to be directly passed on to subscribers and would presumably have to come out of profits.

Some respondents indicated that they did not think subscribers would mind financially supporting public access if they did realize they were in fact supporting it, as long as the amount that was added each month was low. Mr. Chinigo of the Westerly Advisory Council said he did not think subscribers would mind paying as long as it was only one dollar per month, but if it were in the two to three dollar a month range, they would mind. It is interesting to note that Mr. Chinigo was unable to provide the researcher with any data regarding the budget for public access in his system so that it would seem that Mr. Chinigo does not know how much public access is adding to the bills. Mr. Vincens also referred to this level of monthly support as probably not being a problem in subscribers' minds. Mr. Weaver pointed out that most subscribers probably would not bemoan the fifty cents per month that public access adds to the bill in their system. He felt that the three subscribers who would rather have rate reductions probably didn't realize that it is only fifty cents a month per subscriber.

Several respondents referred to conditional stipulations with regard to support from subscribers. Their feeling was that if a subscriber watches the access programming he would probably not mind paying for it. Mr. Alpert brings reality to this hypothetical question of whether subscribers would financially support access if they knew they were funding it, by pointing out that it is

not a question that the public gets to vote on. He said, "It is decided on by the town government along with input from the Newton Cable Advisory Committee." The public should be given more information about the decision. The public's purported ignorance of their financial support is an uncomfortable fit for an institution with the philosophical underpinning that public access has. The only honest way for public access to operate is for public access to have informed subscriber support.

Mr. Pizzella in his response referred to the basic right to freedom of speech that we have as Americans. He feels that it is such an important basic right that we must find a way to support it. I agree with him that in our current society, the possibility of freedom of speech is diminished by lack of access to the media. He and his community's public access effort is to be acknowledged as being the effort which receives the least financial support of those that were studied. The town provides the bulk of tangible support while volunteers provide the labor to make access happen in the town of Newington. Their efforts are supplemented by grants, and the use of Cox and members' television equipment.

It is uncertain that the exercise or the possibility for the exercise of free speech should be solely the financial burden of cable subscribers, especially if they

don't realize they are paying the price. It is also unclear why television needs to be the access medium. Freedom of speech is important in our democratic system. The free exchange of viewpoints in our political system is a positive goal. But freedom of speech could be accomplished through access radio. This could still be carried by the cable company although broadcasting would be more democratic so that everyone could listen not just those who can afford to pay monthly bills for cable television. Access radio does exist but little has been written about it. One thing is certain about access radio and that is that radio or audio is a lot less expensive and easier to produce than television. Radio and television equipment are miles apart in terms of price. Also audio equipment is a lot easier to operate. Inadequate attention has been paid to the possibility of radio fulfilling the exercise of our first amendment rights in our technological oriented society. Those concerned about the importance of public access in our communities should also be concerned about the cost.

Mr. Pizzella would not agree with me about using radio as an access medium. During his interview, he stated that because so many people get their information about what is happening in the world through television, to have access to that audience public access television is needed. Yet, there is a flaw in his position, for later in his interview

he said, with regard to the evaluation of public access, that the size of the access audience should not be a criterion for evaluating the success. It can't cut both ways either audience size is important or it is not.

It is unclear from this research how the funding levels to be provided to public access were determined. It has been reported that by law in Massachusetts, up to 5% of subscriber fees can be requested for access support. But the rationale for that level of funding is not found here and would be an interesting piece of background with regard to funding public access. Likewise, the Department of Public Utilities in Rhode Island and Connecticut have mandated staff levels or funding levels for public access efforts but this research did not uncover the criteria that are or were used to set these levels.

There are some noteworthy efforts to get the word out that public access television costs money. Note that in the new Newton contract section 6.11 states that the city shall require that the access corporation acknowledge that the cable company funds the access programming. It requires that at the beginning and end of each access program the following appear: "Major funding for this program has been provided by Continental Cablevision. Continental Cablevision is not responsible for the content of this program." It goes on to say that if Continental

Cablevision voluntarily places a separate line item on subscribers' bills showing the four percent that goes to fund public access, and the access corporation would no longer need to put the acknowledgment on the beginning and end of each program.

Although these two methods inform the public that there is a cost to public access, the line item on the bill is the only one that makes them aware that they are the one paying that cost. Considering the evidence that is presented here, the cable company would probably put the line item on the bill if they wanted people to start complaining to the Cable Advisory Committee about paying for public access. The most forthright thing to do is to always put it on the bill and not have that choice left to the cable company. People should be allowed to know as much as possible how much they are paying for specific services. Only then can they determine whether they feel it is worth funding.

The Connecticut case never spoke of putting a separate line item on subscribers' bills but did explain the plans to put a separate check off box whereby subscribers could add to their bills monies which would go to funding public access. This check off box may actually make people think that if they don't check it off none of their monthly bill goes to support public access. That would be untrue. It

will, however, be very interesting to see the level of financial support that comes from this voluntary check off box process.

Public access is, in many regards, like the public library. Most people would agree that the concept of each sounds like a good idea. Yet in some communities in Massachusetts, for instance in Lunenburg, the library has closed due to lack of public funding. Unlike the public library, public access for the most part, in the cases studied, does not receive financial support from public taxes but rather through monthly subscriber rates. The subscribers deserve to know what they are paying for. Subscribers should have more opportunity to input their feelings into the decision making process. If people do not support public access, it behooves the supporters of public access to make sure that there is both conceptual and financial support for it. Financial support should not be based on the reported belief that the subscriber doesn't know what they are financially supporting. If the costs for public access are too high to receive subscriber support then access efforts could think about providing access radio, which would be less expensive. Public access is a good concept but care must be taken that it doesn't get so expensive that people feel it is financially not worth paying such a high price for.

Potential Evaluation Directions

There is a wide division in the suggested ways to evaluate public access. They range from Mr. McNamara's scheme where public access would be a separate tier and subscribers could pay for it if they wanted it to Mr. Pizzella feeling that public access television is a basic right that must be made available to all even if only a few people watch.

The responses can be categorized as those that are numerically oriented and those that are more qualitative measures. Mr. Eyden, Mr. Cronin, Mr. Lionne, Mr. Doar, Mr. Olchick, Mr. Vincens, Ms., Welch and Mr. McNamara all felt there was some role for numerical data in the evaluation of public access. A common suggestion was to measure the diversity of programming, though how this would be done was rarely articulated clearly. Also common was the suggestion to measure the output of access efforts by totaling the number of hours of public access programming produced and the number of volunteers trained. Beyond training the volunteers, quantifying the retention of volunteers and the number of hours they worked on programming after they were trained were given by two respondents as suggestions for how to evaluate public access efforts. Measuring the amount of viewership that public access receives was only

mentioned by three respondents in response to this question and one of those three respondents mentioned subscribers' level of viewership only after subscribers were mentioned by the researcher. As shall be pointed out, there were opposing viewpoints on using viewership as an evaluation criteria.

Three respondents expressed concern about using only numbers to evaluate public access efforts. Ms. Welsh expressed concern that although the numbers are indicative of a level of activity the more intangible and immeasurable question of whether the access effort had general community respect was a higher question to ask. Mr. Doar felt that each community was different and that use of numbers to create some sort of standard of performance was not the correct way to go. Mr. Lionne was concerned that if quantifiable evaluation was done there would be no reflection on what quality there was in the programming. He could not define exactly what he meant by quality in this context.

Two respondents, Mr. Pizzella and Grace Makepeace, felt strongly that the level of viewership should not be used to evaluate public access efforts. They felt that no matter how many people viewed a public access program it would be worthwhile.

The other suggestions on how to evaluate public access efforts are of a more qualitative nature. In general, the qualitative suggestions came from non-cable company employees. One qualitative suggestion on how to evaluate public access cable television efforts focused on the producers of public access programming. Two respondents suggested that data be collected to ascertain the satisfaction of the access users regarding their production experience. Two respondents suggested that the public hearing approach was the method to be used to evaluate public access. One of these respondents, Mr. Eyden, suggested that the public hearings need to be better publicized. Mr. Pizzella felt that the importance of the content of the material on public access should be the major criterion used in the evaluation of public access efforts. Cronin felt the quality of programs was important but seemed to imply that by quality he meant diversity.

Mr. Chinigo offered a more generic approach or process for how public access should be evaluated. He suggested that a list be drawn up of concerns regarding current public access performance. This list should then be prioritized by order of what to do first, second, etc. Then the list should serve as a guideline of what needs to be done to improve public access. Mr. Chinigo did not expand on how the list would be drawn up or who would prioritize the list.

As for the question of who should be the evaluator of public access efforts, generally the response was the entity that the respondent was most closely associated with should be the evaluator of public access efforts. For example, Martin Alpert and Allen Eyden who are members of the Cable Advisory Committee in their respective Massachusetts towns felt the Cable Advisory Committee should be the evaluator. On the other hand employees of cable companies felt more inclined to suggest the use of subscriber feed back that cable companies received. Mostly they suggested the surveys conducted by cable companies would be utilized as the basis for evaluation.

There was generally a great deal of reference to input being gathered from the public or from subscribers which would form the basis of any evaluation effort. Some would suggest it be collected through the survey method. This response was usually made by an employee of a cable company suggesting that this data be used. Others suggested gathering input via public hearing comments. Public hearing comments was mentioned usually by members of Cable Advisory Committees. Public access users, as previously mentioned, were suggested as resources for input to evaluations by two respondents.

In general, what was suggested for the future as the way to evaluate public access efforts reflected, for them most part, the current practice of the respondent. For instance, Mr. Doar suggested recording data on the number of volunteers trained each year. This is a piece of data that is currently collected for his purposes. Another example would be Monson's Grace Makepeace suggesting that the public hearing be used to evaluate public access efforts. Public access in Monson was established as the result of a public hearing on the subject.

Conclusions

There were many similarities between the definitions of public access offered by the respondents. But the differences and the vagueness of some definitions are reason enough to suggest that each community make the effort to define public access cable television for themselves. Goals were not found to be well defined and there seemed to be some difference of opinion between cable advisory members and cable company employees as to the way to define success, with the cable company employees more likely to mention audience as part of their response. The definition of public access should be results or function oriented so that goal statements can follow from the definition. An important component of the definition is that editorial control must be held by the access producer.

While the purpose and definition of public access was generally agreed upon there is a great deal of variety from community to community as to the form of public access cable television. This may result from the specifics of contracts that communities sign with cable companies within a state and from the differences in regulating cable between states. This diversity makes research in this area difficult.

There seems to be a general feeling on the part of committee members that more local control is the direction to move in with regard to improving public access cable television. On the other hand cable companies, who agree to fund public access in the renewal contracts, seem to be concerned about losing control, especially when it comes to the costs associated with public access cable television and the return on their investment via audience size for public access. For this difference of point of view to be bridged we need to turn not to the cable advisory committee or to the cable company but toward subscribers. Evidence was presented that reveals that cable subscribers, once they find out what public access costs them each month, also become concerned about the cost of public access cable television. This sentiment must be changed. Public access should not exist because it is mandated but because the public understands what it is paying for and wants to pay for it.

It is suggested herein that a more formal and quantifiable evaluation process may be access's best rebuttal to the concerns over costs. A standard, comparative, and partially quantifiable evaluation process should be developed by professional organizations working in this area so that criterion referenced evaluation practices develop. These practices should be put into place by the franchising authority. It should be policy that those that govern the franchising process develop and administer an input mechanism beyond the public hearing, which attempts to determine how subscribers feel about access and its costs. It should be more of a referendum approach rather than the current structure. It is also suggested that public access radio be looked at because it would be considerably less expensive and would still fulfill the basic freedom of speech need that access is said to serve.

The research revealed that most interviewees did not think subscribers knew that they were paying for public access cable television or how much they were paying for it. This situation seems to verge on dishonesty and it is felt that subscribers should be told on their monthly bill how much public access cable television is costing them. At minimum this knowledge might cause subscribers to ask what they are getting for their money and thus become aware

of what is happening with regard to public access cable television. Through this line of questioning there would be more accountability for those in local control of the public access effort.

Those who support public access cable television feel that public access is threatened by a new FCC policy which allows phone companies to transmit video programs over phone lines and deliver them to homes. This would probably lead to a marked decrease in the numbers of subscribers of cable television and could ultimately lead to the demise of cable companys. The phone companies would not need to obtain a franchise from local governments therefore local government would have no control. Unless the new policy can be rejected or changed to include provisions for free or low cost public access to video dial tone through local phone companies it could have severe repercussions for public access. The loss would be a loss of freedom of speech for those who can not afford to pay commercial prices in order to be put on the electronic media. The N.F.L.C.P. is trying to mount a letter writing campaign addressed to the FCC opposing the provision.

It is important for us as poeple who live in America to pursue the goal of having the possibility for plain folks to talk to each other locally using the electronic media without any editorial control imposed and without a

high cost involved. Although I am not convinced that the high cost of using the video medium is the best way to provide this necessary extension of our freedom of speech, I do feel that an outlet for such communication should be pursued. The local flavor of public access is an important aspect that should be preserved for there is evidence that local needs that can not be met by broadcasters are being met by access. Through public access cable television people have gotten involved in local issues. At a time when voter turnout on election day is in decline there is evidence that access can draw people's attention to issues and that they get involved. The empowerment that public access television provides to the community is a positive resource.

Suggestions for Further Study

It is very difficult to study public access as a separate entity. The cases presented here bore evidence to the fact that public access is often intertwined with other programming activity. Methodologies of future research need to bear this in mind.

There were two basic models of public access efforts presented in these cases. They were the community television type of model and the separate non-profit access

corporation. Future research should be directed at ascertaining the functional and resulting differences imposed by those models.

With regard to funding, historical research could serve to identify the criteria and decision making that went into determining funding levels for public access cable television. Currently, according to one respondent, the D.P.U.C. of Connecticut is experimenting with different ways to fund public access. This experimentation should be researched so as to become part of the available literature on the subject. The placement of check off boxes on subscribers bills allowing them to give additional money to the local access concern is a development which would be interesting to follow.

A study comparing the path of public access in the U.S. with Canada could be a fruitful subject. Canada continues to mandate public access at a national level and may have developed a more systematic approach to public access than is possible in the United States where each state and in Massachusetts, each town within the state, regulates public access requirements.

The question of whether subscribers realize they pay for public access programming remains . This is an important question and could be asked in conjunction with a

range of prices they might be willing to pay for such services. Are the budgets for public access efforts out of line with what subscribers are willing to pay?

Research on strategies to preserve the functional aspects of public access television which support First Amendment rights while diminishing the costs involved would be worthwhile. Public access radio could be a viable alternative to the expense of the television medium.

APPENDIX

FORMS AND LETTERS

CONSENT FORM

I _____ WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT TITLED: DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE TELEVISION FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONTINUED FUNDING. I UNDERSTAND THAT I WILL BE INTERVIEWED IN-DEPTH ABOUT PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE TELEVISION, BY ANN MRVICA, A GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS. I UNDERSTAND THAT I WILL BE ONE OF TEN PEOPLE INTERVIEWED. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THE INTERVIEW PROCESS MAY SPAN MORE THAN ONE INTERVIEW SESSION. I FURTHER AGREE TO ALLOW MY INTERVIEWS TO BE AUDIO TAPED, TRANSCRIBED AND INCORPORATED INTO A WRITTEN DISSERTATION TO BE PRESENTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS. I ALSO GIVE MY PERMISSION TO ALLOW THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH TO BE USED IN JOURNAL ARTICLES AND IN PRESENTATIONS TO GROUPS INTERESTED IN PUBLIC ACCESS CABLE TELEVISION. I AGREE TO ALLOW THE USE OF MY NAME TO IDENTIFY MY STATEMENTS. I ALSO AGREE THAT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS THAT I PROVIDE ACCESS TO, FOR THE RESEARCHER, MAY BE UTILIZED IN THE RESEARCH REPORT.

WHILE CONSENTING AT THIS TIME TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE

INTERVIEWS, I MAY WITHDRAW FROM THE ACTUAL INTERVIEW
PROCESS OR HAVE SPECIFIC EXCERPTS FROM MY INTERVIEW
WITHDRAWN UP TO BUT NOT BEYOND 30 DAYS AFTER THE DATE THE
INTERVIEW WAS DONE.

IN SIGNING THIS FORM YOU ARE ALSO ASSURING US THAT YOU WILL
MAKE NO FINANCIAL CLAIMS ON US FOR THE USE OF THE MATERIAL
IN YOUR INTERVIEWS.

I HAVE READ THIS FORM AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNDER THE
ABOVE CONDITIONS.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Ann Mrvica
68 Hickory Drive
Princeton, MA
01541

Tom Chinigo
Street
Westerly, RI 02891

Dear Mr. Chinigo,

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in the study titled:
Developing a Framework for the Evaluation of Public Access
Cable Television for the Purpose of Continued Funding.
Following up on our telephone discussion I have enclosed a
consent form for your approval. You will need to read,
sign and return this form to me.

In addition, to be as prepared as I can be for your
interview I would like to receive as many of the following
items if it is possible. If it is not possible please
don't worry about it.

- brochures or newsletters on public access
- your rules for public access users
- documents that outline the purpose of public access in
your community
- memos or minutes of meetings regarding public access
- material that pertains to any evaluation done of public
access
- annual reports of the last 2-3 years you might have
generated
- materials that are in license renewal or budget proposals
that pertain to public access
- short excerpts of public access programs produced by your
public access
- recent sample schedule for public access programs
- any other material you think makes sense to send

Enclosed you will find the outline that I plan to use in
the interview. It is sent to you now to give you an
opportunity to think about your responses and where
necessary, to try to find data from your sources.

Some of the questions will need to be modified for the
Rhode Island situation, where there is no refranchising, but
with the questions as is you will see what I am trying to
get at with my study.

You are an expert on public access because of your position
in the community. I think sharing information on public
access is an important part of the access effort. I look
forward to your participation in this research.

I will call you on June 3 after 4:30 to conduct the phone interview. I need to receive your signed consent form at sometime in the near future. Thank-you for your cooperation. Please feel free to call me with any questions. My office number is (508) 345-2151 ext. 3260. My home number is (508) 464-5321.

Sincerely,

Ann Mrvica

Background on each cable system

1) Type of community: urban suburb rural

2) # homes passed_____

3) # homes subscribing_____

4) subscribers per mile _____

5) ethnic mix of community:

6) income level of community:_____

7) education level of community:_____

8) # channels capacity on system:_____

of channels activated _____

channels for public access:_____

9) Staff for public access: _____full-time
equivalents

10) Public access hours on the cable per week not including
character generator _____ hours

11) # of original programs each month_____

12) Do you use categories to classify the programming
produced by public access?

If so, what categories of you

use?_____13) How does

last year's programming fit into these categories?

14) # of public access producers trained last
year _____

How many were members or a group as opposed to individual
producers?

_____members of group _____individual
producers

15) # of different groups or individuals who requested
public access time in the last 12 months _____

16) # of active public access producers, where active is
defined as producing or helping to produce a program within
the last year _____17) total # of hours all
volunteers combined put in on public access within the last
year _____hours.

18) What is the dollar value of public access equipment in
your community?

19) Does public access have its own equipment? If it is
shared please explain.

20) Does public access have a studio?

21) What percentage of available time is that studio
used? _____%

22) Studio size_____

23) What is the number of portable camera/deck systems does
public access have? _____

24) What percentage of the available time are these
portable systems being used? _____

25) What is the number of editing systems available for
public access? _____

26) What format is used by public access? VHS

3/4"U-matic S-VHS other_____

INTERVIEW OUTLINE:

- 1) How long has this community had public access cable television?
 - 2) How long have you been involved with public access cable television?
 - 3) How would you define public access cable television?
 - 4) What are the goals of Public Access as you see them in your community?
 - 5) Are there any formally stated goals?
 - 6) How were they defined?
 - 7) How would you define SUCCESS for public access cable television in your community?
 - 8) How would you finish this statement: I know public access cable television is a success when I see _____
- What other endings could you put on the end of that sentence?
- 9) How is public access funded in your situation?
 - 10) How is public access set up in your community?
(structure, housed, staff paid by)
 - 11) What is the budget for Public Access in your system?
 - 12) What does that budget cover?
 - 13) How did the decision on the determination of funding get made?
 - 14) Can you tell me about the refranchising process your system went through? When was that?

15) Did Public Access ask for more money during the refranchising or budgeting process?

16) Could you explain how it was decided to ask for more (the same or less) money for Public Access during the refranchising process?

17) Was there any evaluation of access efforts?

Could you tell me about those evaluation efforts? (ie. how the evaluation originated, who it was for, how it was funded, how the evaluator was selected, what questions the evaluation tried to answer, how the evaluation is expected to impact decisions)

May I see any documents that pertain to the evaluation process?

18) Was documentation as to what Public Access had done with funds from the last contract asked for?

19) Tell me about issues that arose about the funding of Public Access.

20) Were there any key factors that helped or hindered getting the funding you requested?

21) May I gain access to any documents generated in the renewal of license process that dealt with Public Access?

22) Was there any set 'standard' that was used to compare your Public Access efforts to?

23) Any comparision at all made to other systems that you can recall?

What effect do you think Public Access has had on the community?

24) How do you think the time and money invested in public access could be used to better advantage?

25) Thinking about the process of refranchising, evaluation, or budgeting; how do you think the cable subscribers feel about funding Public Access?

26) Is there anything you would recommend to others who find their public access cable television at the juncture of license renewal, evaluation or budgeting?

27) FOR EXEC. DIR. OF ACCESS Who do you report to?

How do you get evaluated for job performance?

27) FOR CABLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE Who does your committee report to?

How has the work of the cable committee been received?

Now I would like to focus on the possibilities of how public access could be evaluated. Your responses are very important since you have a working knowledge of what public access is.

28) How do you feel Public Access should be evaluated?

29) What criteria or standard could be used to evaluate Public Access?

30) Who should be the evaluator of Public Access efforts?

31) Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

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